

# The SMART SET

*Edited by  
George Jean Nathan  
and  
H.L. Mencken.*



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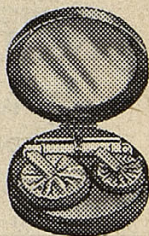
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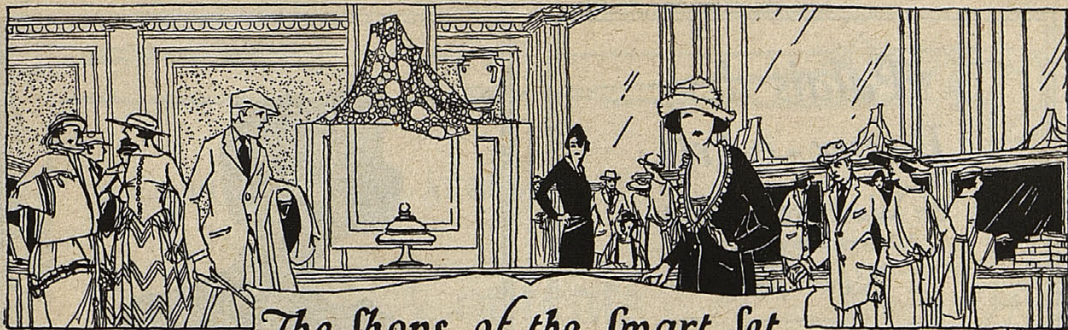
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Manuscripts must be addressed, "Editors of THE SMART SET"

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YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION \$4.00

SINGLE COPIES 35 CENTS

Issued Monthly by the Smart Set Company, Inc., 25 West 45th Street, New York

Entered as second class matter, March 27, 1900, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879

Printed in U. S. A.

Eltinge F. Warner, President and Treasurer

George Jean Nathan, Secretary

Western Advertising Office, Wrigley Building, Chicago, Ill.

The Smart Set is published in England at 265, Strand, London, W. C. 2.



# The Puritans

*By R. Lynn Riggs*

IN the forest lurking  
Schemed the known foes,  
But there were savage enemies  
Other than those:

In their heads prowling  
And prying at will,  
Little eager questionings  
Would not be still,

Whispered to their senses,  
"Come—what's a crime?  
What's a body good for  
Now or any time?"

And they could never be happy;  
They were meshed in an iron mesh  
By the fear of God and damnation  
And the feel of flesh.



# The SMART SET

The  
Aristocrat  
Among  
Magazines



## Sentiment

By Morris Gilbert

HE pursed his lips. . . . He began to think of an evening in Charlton Street when a young man played pieces by Erik Satie. It had been delightful. "Stop, little piece of moss, you're tickling me," the baby jellyfish cried as it curled up under a rock for its after-dinner nap. Then there had been a small bit that described seven bad odors in terms of music. Satie was an original. . . . He wanted to smile, but restrained himself. . . .

He found himself remembering a prize-fight in Boston—the tigerish "Scotch Wop" standing above the prostrate figure of one Johnny O'Leary while the referee counted "One . . . Two . . . Three . . . Four . . . Five . . . Six . . . Seven . . . Eight . . . Nine . . . Ten!" . . .

He remembered a dinner in New Orleans at Antoine's. There had been Peppers Rockefeller—and Pommes Soufflées . . . just after he landed. He retraced that voyage—Cristobal—Bocas del Toro—Kingston—hazy velvet mountains with dewy mist on them—great splayed banana leaves—the little engine that ran away from its cars on the down-slope—iridescent lapping waters in the reefs at Port Antonio . . . He remembered the night he went fishing for jacks—a lantern-light chiaroscuro on swarthy faces, arms pulling fast on oars that leaped through phosphorus—the barracuda that took bait, hook, and all. . . .

He thought of a chap he had meant to write to six months before. He could have kicked himself for putting it off



so long—was it too late? . . . He thought of a cocking main he once attended. And of one gallant stag impaled on a two-inch spur. . . .

Then he remembered the time he did forty push-ups in the gym at college—he couldn't do it now—something told him he couldn't negotiate ten. Those days of agility and muscular resource seemed very long ago. After all, there was nothing like fresh air, regular meals, good hours—early to bed!

He was beginning to evoke profoundly sad things: "Jürgen," that melancholy masterpiece—the passing of youth—woman as a sex—the slackness of domestic coffee-making, not

to mention tea—Coningsby Dawson. . . .

He remembered some Moulin-à-vent he had drunk in Chartres. The thought bumped into his nervous system with an impact like an automatic riveter. His throat shriveled.

He thought of a blue necktie . . . a setter pup . . . a Degas . . . the Palisades . . . Babe Ruth . . . the war . . . the Parker House . . . a classical dictionary . . . single-tax. . . .

He detached his lips from those of the young person he had been embracing, paused, and murmured, "I love you." Then he affixed his lips once more and went on thinking.



## The Moon Is a Big Marigold

*By A. Newberry Choyce*

THE moon is a big marigold. . . .  
Oh, Woman! would you care  
To wear the moon, the golden moon  
In your cloudy hair?

And all the stars are diamonds. . . .  
Shall I tear them down  
In burning ropes, in silver ropes  
To glitter on your gown?

Oh! you might have so many things. . . .  
Silence and minstrelsy.  
Why should you thief the little song  
From out the heart of me?



A GIRL only screams while you are attempting to kiss her. No one ever heard one scream during the actual kissing process itself.



THERE are two kinds of women: the kind a man talks about in his sleep, and the kind who listen to him talking.



# Smooth

[*A Complete Novelette*]

By *Whit Burnett*

## CHAPTER I

THE head of Castellana was gone. Its absence, Alwin Beegen observed as he rubbed his chin and looked into the window of the South Temple street store, was just another loss, robbing the visible town of one more pleasing thing. Castellana, with her smooth, white cheeks, her drooping eyes and her grave, pale smile. . . . Some day, no doubt, some person also would buy the bust of the young Italian girl, and that, too, they would take out of the window of the art shop, and then there would be nothing in Salt Lake City but the hills and the square, gray walls of buildings—these for a fellow to look at the rest of the long, smoky winter.

Alwin moved to where he could get a side view of the Italian girl. The profile fascinated him, and for a long time his eyes meditated on the ivorylike surface of her forehead, contemplating the curve of a gently rounded chin, the unbroken bud of the small, clean lips, the suggestion of little breasts. In the eyes of this young person Alwin Beegen could read a quietness and gentleness that pleased him and, for a moment, it seemed as if the bust of this warm and calm Italian girl meant something more than statuary to him, as if it expressed something of himself.

Behind him, overcoated persons were passing, their shadows blurring against the window. Alwin Beegen thrust his hands into his overcoat pockets and strode into the store.

"Yes, sir," he said, as if defying someone, "I'm going to buy her!"

Actually, it was not an unpremeditated decision. For weeks he had known that after work some afternoon near pay-day he would stand in front of the South Temple street window, debate the matter fully, and then go in and buy the young Italian girl. As for the marble head of the superior Castellana—it had been marked at \$95 and so was impossible, an object of beauty to be sure, but one to be admired but distantly, visually, a little unsatisfactorily.

On the way out with the bulky package under his arm, however, Alwin wondered if he had not done a foolish thing. She was, of course, worth the fifteen dollars. He could prove this by showing it to anyone who appreciated such things. Turner, for instance, Turner, the city editor, who had tastes for really artistic work and offended the natives by laughing at everything in Salt Lake—he would be interested.

But it was after working hours and Alwin gave up the idea of returning to the darkening, dirty newspaper office. The others who might like to see it: the society editor, who would admire the little Italian girl and say, "What an odd boy you are, buying things like that," and McNiel, the dark-haired young sob-sister, who would like it in indefinite terms, looking absently over his shoulder and saying nothing in particular—both would be gone. Only old man Williams would be on the job, he reflected, old man Williams, snipping away at exchanges and interpolating cracked,



disparaging monosyllables in the chatter of a few tired reporters or copy-readers. And these fellows would be smoking, and talking about women, their feet offensively cocked up on the table and their attention divided between spitting at a cuspidor and missing it and watching the clock for five, when they would leave the office for the day.

Alwin Beegen went home. For the eighteen, tall, aloof, blond years of his life, he had lived in a section of the city where the streets climbed upward until they came to little, low, shrubless brown hills. There they stopped. To the east were the high, purpled Wasatch Mountains, running like irregular rhythms from north to south until they lost themselves in a blue mist thirty miles away to join with mountains from the west of the valley at the Narrows of the Jordan River. Alwin's father contracted for buildings on a small scale, and he did considerable hard, outside work, so that his hands were red and chapped and unpleasant to look at. At times they irritated Alwin as the mountains often did, in a disquieting, scratchy way, as if his father's gnarled, red knuckles and the irregular, outlined saw-teeth of the mountains were alike intolerably hurtful to the eye. Of late, he had noticed, too, that his mother's hands were roughening perceptibly. Alwin wondered if that was because she had given up china painting—which he had thought she did quite well—or whether it was she no longer took care of her hands, or whether it was her hands were beginning to show the signs of life and years. Probably the latter. It was what people came to some time: Housework, office-work; wrinkles, age. And it was all a little too bad.

Alwin considered on the home-bound street car that at this time of day his mother probably would be getting supper for him and his father. In the summer at this hour, when he came home from the office, with a copy of the *Evening Telegram* in his pocket, often conspicuously marked with a heavy pencil to show the number of news

stories he had written, Alwin would sometimes find her on the front porch, rocking and looking a little absently at the low north hills. That was when she had given up china painting because the smells of the paints caused persistent headaches. Once she said that the north hills were like the hills in Germany. She had come from Germany when she was five years old.

Alwin wondered, without questioning verbally, whether actually a person would remember back that far; it didn't seem reasonable. But he rather enjoyed the idea that his mother liked these hills; he felt that way about them, too, and this matter between them, although they never mentioned it, he knew made them a little more kindred, somehow. . . . From the car window, Alwin Beegen looked out upon them, the little Italian girl bundled upon his lap, and he idly amused himself, as the car clattered along, with the thought that they were very old—these hills—and had been rounded off exquisitely smooth, and now, as they rolled past into a graying sky, their outlines were rhythmically soothing, like even, flowing music that is sensed vaguely when one is dozing off to sleep.

Alwin went to his room, a little square place in the rear of the house, where he slept and kept his books and violin. Carefully he unwrapped the many windings of paper and set the bust upon his bureau in the corner. Four or five times he turned it and moved it, so that it would appear precisely as he wished it to appear when a person entered the room. He concluded the three-quarter front view the correct effect. Then he called his mother.

For several years afterward Alwin Beegen remembered that scene. However, it was not essentially climactic. His mother came into the room. She had been ironing. Alwin noticed that she was tired, and her dull-brown hair straggled a little over her forehead. He resisted an impulse, when she came in, to smooth back her hair, to make it lay



evenly; a wisp that shot out suddenly here and there disturbed him.

"Look," he said, "what I've brought home."

He stepped aside, and the little Italian girl looked out calmly from the white-covered bureau in the corner. He thought her diminutively beautiful.

"Like it . . . like it?" he felt himself silently commanding. His mother stood still. "Like it! . . ."

"Yes," she said. "It's very pretty, Alwin."

"I didn't want to spend the money," he relaxed, tremendously relieved. Money had nothing to do with it, but he thought he ought to mention it casually. "But she kind of appealed to me. I like her. Don't you?"

He went to the figure, talking now volubly, rapidly, turning the bust around, displaying its profile, showing how well the piece had been cast. It was the only beautiful thing in Salt Lake City. It was even better than bigger and more expensive things. It gave his room some life! Look how smooth the cheeks were. . . .

His mother listened for a little while and then walked out of the room.

"I think," she said, when she went out, "you're in love with that girl."

Alwin Beegen thought a moment.

"Well," he began. "Well—"

But she had gone back to her ironing, and since he had no ready reply to that, he let it drop. He took off his coat, went into the bathroom, whistling, and washed his hands with great care—for he enjoyed washing his hands—and after drying them carefully, and briskly brushing his finger-nails with the coarse towel, he returned to his room. Then he closed the door, softly, and from a bureau drawer removed a little round tube of camphor-ice, which he rubbed on his hands.

He strode back and forth in his room, well satisfied with the day, and without thinking much about anything. Now and then he could detect the sizzling smell of roasting meat creeping in from the kitchen. Supper. Bed. Tomorrow

row the divorce-court *matinée*. Probably Turner would figure out some feature assignment for him—he stood pretty well with Turner—and Turner had ideas—all those Los Angeles fellows had who came through Salt Lake and wandered out again. They were not tied down, cramped—those fellows. Travel probably gave them that view of things. . . . This little Utah town, with its dull people, its winter smoke, its gray ugliness and its square edges!

Now and then Alwin Beegen's right hand flew up and brushed his cheek, a nervous action he was hardly conscious of. Sometimes he wished he, too, could get away. . . . Alwin picked up the violin case in the corner, spent a few moments with *Solvejg's Song*, and when the last round note had rolled itself out into a gracious smoothness which surprised as much as pleased him, he shut the case up quickly and put the violin out of sight. His face was glowing.

"That, now," he said, "was all right. If I could make tones like that all the time—tones that didn't *rasp*—"

He heard his father labor up the back stairs. Heavy, clumping steps. Dinner—or supper, as they called it—would soon be ready.

Alwin began to walk his room again for several minutes, occasionally looking up to admire the bust of the little Italian girl. Then he stopped before her, and for so long a time he brooded over the little figure that he seemed slowly to lose himself in a kind of visual haze, to become a little dizzy. And then, impulsively, out went his hands, and touched the cool, smooth cheeks—stroking them tenderly, ecstatically, as one might expect from a lover. . . .

A minute later he burst through the door, without looking back, and plumped down silently, almost sullenly, at the supper table, replying mechanically to his father's "Hello." He felt oddly as if he were guilty of something, something that he wanted to justify, openly, verbally, immediately, and have done. But by and by this passed and he listened to his father talk on and on about



the difficulty of getting any work out of men when wages were going up right along and labor, in general, was so damned scarce, anyway, these days.

## CHAPTER II

ALWIN BEEGEN's desires began early in his life. At nine he longed to become a great violinist, and at ten he was putting in more time practicing from the big, thick Hohman Book No. 1 than he was putting in on his lessons at school. But at fifteen he rather let the violin lapse. He preferred to read. And, later, when he went into the newspaper business and his vision broadened somewhat, he saw that being a professional musician was not the thing for him.

He had been right in high school. Then was when he had begun to enjoy himself in words, conscious that he was amazing the other students in his English class with the grandiloquent force of his pen and the superior tone in the required "compositions," which he filled with lovely, large, smooth, effulgently flowering words. . . . Words offered so much, expressed so much of a person, were so entirely delightful, beautiful, flexible. And he saw that this was the big desire in him, and that his hope of making life over in words would some day make of him a great writer. So the day after graduation he entered the newspaper business—the profession of journalism, his teachers called it—with a consciousness of his own ardor which kept him at work, day and night. He meant to get ahead in newspaper work. It was the answer.

Between his sixteenth and his eighteenth year, Alwin Beegen read and wrote, worked and returned home. He avoided girls because he could see that they would interfere. He assumed a superior air in such matters, and told himself repeatedly that girls were a distraction for a person who wanted really to do anything. In consequence, Alwin's high school friends let him alone.

When he felt he wanted to go to a "party" or a theatre, or to a dance with some girl, he locked his door and sat down in the square little room in the back of the house and read. Biographies, verse, conflicting things, he read. The biographies held him, for he could see there how these important personages had fought to keep themselves important if they intended to do things, and how they had battled against the people and conditions around them in an effort to keep their personalities inviolate: Strindberg, who could not get along with his teachers at school; Shelley, who rebelled . . .

Before the bureau in his room, Alwin would stand at times for several minutes studying himself in the mirror in a detached way, wondering, seeing before himself the tall, uncertain, groping person that he felt at the time he was. Wide, open eyes that would narrow soon enough, he thought, squinting eventually as old man Raddon squinted. Raddon was crooked. Life had done that to him. Raddon had let life "get" him, twist him. He wondered what life would do to Alwin Beegen, and he decided he would resist its clutch if ever he felt it trying to pull him down as evidently it had pulled down old man Williams, or Timmons on the copy desk, or Brickles, who covered the city hall—Brickles, who had been sapped out for years and years, married, dragged down to die in the harness of the same old job he had cinched ten or fifteen years ago.

And when he studied himself like that, Alwin felt that inside there was something he must build up. The thought satisfied him and made him feel even a little pity, at times, for the other typical young fellows he had known at high school and in the neighborhood where he lived. They had no uncommon qualities—nothing in them. Most of them already had settled down to stenographic jobs, or clerkships. Sometimes he read in the society columns the announcement of the marriage of some such young persons and he could see in advance how it would be with them:



A job, a little square, yellow brick house, debts, a Victrola shortly, a baby, later a Ford, a picnic in Liberty Park on Sunday, and a wife growing gradually fatter, greasy-faced in summer, overshoeed in winter. . . . Alwin Beegen determined he would not be caught like that. Life would *mean* something to him. He had tastes!

He felt that way about it in the spring of his long, pale, nineteenth year, when the city's gray stone Temple, the Boston and Newhouse buildings emerged from the banks of frost and smoke and began again to be visible from the benchland, poking themselves above the smaller red brick and sandstone buildings of the town. He felt bigger in the spring, and when the snow that had lain dirty and caked all winter had been washed away by the rains, the earth coming out green and smelly, he would amble home from the office, restless and conscious that he ought to go on walking, swinging his arms, and striding past his home and up and over the rolling hills he had roamed years before looking for mushrooms and larkspurs, foxgloves and bluebells. He wished then that he were younger, even that he had never gone into the newspaper business, with its gray-faced converts, everlastingly scanning papers stinking of ink. And he wished that it would not seem a juvenile thing to go wandering over the hills even now. And as he looked at them, he felt them react upon him like smoothly rolled out, sonorous waves of verse.

As he walked home through the lonely spring days, Alwin considered life, and its pullings down and convertings. But in the bigness of his young thoughts, he would throw out his arms, as if to embrace the freshness of the growing world (first observing that no one could see this evidence of foolishness) and then he would say in a kind of bursting enthusiasm of spirits and nerves:

"God!" and laugh a little, "I should be an artist. An *artist*!"

But when the winter of the year came on again, and the trees along the streets

had turned black and leafless, looking now like mere skeleton sketches of trees, and the skies were brooding as Alwin thought the skies of Ibsen's wintry Norway must have brooded, these thoughts turned inward. Even then, after three years in the business, Salt Lake newspaper work was catching at him: or—he was not sure—perhaps it was the spirit of the town that was clutching at him, its oppressing, settled-down, married, middle-aged spirit.

Something was trying to "get" him.

When he thought of this, Alwin Beegen became nervous, in an intensified and fearful way, as if he ought to take his hat and run from where he was, to break suddenly and furiously away—at once. For, he knew, it would require something like that. Otherwise, doubtless, he would be brought down like the men on the copy desk, moulded. And that would be all.

He reflected on his earlier defiances against any influence he considered working at him from beneath—against the questioning looks from his father's country relatives, for instance. They came to town in the spring and the fall—these sandy-haired giants—to attend the Mormon church conference, and at those times they clumped in to call on Jim Beegen and his family. They sat stiffly in the parlor chairs, and Alwin always felt self-conscious when he had to come in to shake hands with them.

He was studying the violin those days, but he knew that that was no excuse in the eyes of those hard-working, heavy-chested persons—it was no excuse for his white, smooth, uncalledoused hands they looked at suspiciously. Clearly their heavy, offensive glances disclosed that they suspected he would never come to any really honest good. He knew. So he had flatly refused to go in to meet them the last time they came to town. He was not a husky brute like their coarse-clothed kids. They could probably lick him. All right. But he was somehow better, bigger, than they would ever be—these fellows with their



big red paws meant for hanging onto plows.

He had thought once that work in the *Telegram* office would forever keep him up from the big stream of people like that. For when he was sixteen Alwin Beegen had looked up to the *Telegram* office as a haven of intellectuals and great men. So it was disappointing when later he saw that even there the people were not so much.

Gradually he could see that, clearer when, sometimes, Turner hinted on long walks the two took together—that the people in the office and the town were not the most distinguished in the world. He watched the office staff closely, feeling its even rhythm, its deadening cadence. The stupid routine of the day. The living, working, the eventual end. Somehow it was all a little too small, too ineffectual really to be life.

There was nothing inside these people—they had no restless groping within them, as he had, to translate themselves into greater, vaster things; no ambition to write verse, to play, to see things, to do things. They went to work, got paid, spent their wages Saturday nights for liquor if they were single, or turned their checks over to their wives if they were not. Factory hands! They had settled, and life to them was a job. Even those who now were reporters, Alwin Beegen could see, would eventually become gray countenanced, with faces, as Turner suggested, "like horses." Their set, common faces would denote how they had been caught by life, and their inexpressive hands would not deny the truth, displaying their descent as obviously as their poor sex jokes would label it. All this he saw, and in the full vision he decided he would *not* be brought down like that. It was a conclusion that made him turn his eyes inward, and seeing himself like that, within him grew confidence in a resolve he had made much earlier. He knew an escape from the commonplace, and he would cultivate every means to that end. . . .

He liked smooth things—and the rest of the people around him did not. It was

to be admitted, something even to be proud of, and amplified consciously. His liking for smooth things was what *distinguished* him. It was the keynote of his nature. It was what guided his tastes. . . . Smoothness. . . .

So as long as he had this desire, he would not be like the rest of them. That was plain. So long as he liked smooth things—and his hands remained smooth and young—he himself would be smooth and young, and could not then be brought down, made a routinized square-head. His very tastes would keep him up—his tastes would make something of him. They were the tastes of an artist, of a person of high discriminations. And at this point Alwin Beegen realized that he liked things only in proportion to their smoothness: Clothes. Colors. Words. Tones of Music. Even landscapes, like the hills. Perhaps even the little Italian statue. . . .

"It's what makes me different—better," Alwin Beegen acknowledged. "It's what there is inside. It is the important thing to keep. It will be worth while. Someday when I am bigger, in all ways, I will express it. . . . It is something, all right, to like smooth things."

And so one day, with this idea in his mind, he went walking alone, and took the thought with him to a high place on the snowy benchland that overlooked the city. He wanted to decide what he should do.

The snow along the deserted streets that climbed up to the hills was ankle deep and dirty. When the snow became deeper and cleaner Alwin left the road and struck out through a field, leaving the last trace of road behind.

"My own trail," he thought, after a little, and turned to look back over the procession of footsteps in the white pillowing wake behind him. "My feet punch down the snow—and nobody has ever walked exactly there before. . . . That's a funny thought."

For a long time he stood motionless on the edge of a rise in the ground, his



overcoat loose around him. Below his silhouetted figure lay the city, the frost and smoke hanging in a smudge over the Temple spires. He could see State street lining out like a gray streak on a black canvas, cutting down the valley to the Narrows where the Wasatch and Oquirrh mountains met. The sun was nearly down, washing up a bleary, reddish glow in the west where the waters of Great Salt Lake lay quietly in a copper-tinted light. It was a lonely kind of beauty here. It was how things were when you were above and stood alone: beautiful, lonely, and in a strange way hurtful. It was all right. . . . His grandfather (his mother's father) would liked to have come along on this walk, Alwin thought. His long, tall Dano-German grandfather—people were saying that he was beginning to look like him. Alwin wondered.

"I don't know, though," he debated.

He thought of this grandfather with his long, meditative head, and his stories of the young days in Berlin forty years ago when he had owned six overcoats, a top hat and a cane, and had blandly done his Sunday promenading with the best of them.

"I guess he has been caught, too—now," Alwin considered.

And he was reminded of the job this silent old man had held for years and years (that of a worker in a print shop) and how for years he got up at six o'clock in the morning to be at work on time, and came visiting the Beegen house every Friday with a package of fish for supper. . . .

Alwin Beegen's eyes came back to pick out buildings in the smudge below him, the building in which he worked. Cubes, spires, grotesque things raised their heads through the smoke and winter-dark, and as he stood brooding for a long time, he felt surging inside him a tremendous disgust at some indefinite dirtiness, and he shoved his cold hands into his overcoat, stomping through the snow back home. . . .

"I must get away from here," he said. "I must get away."

## CHAPTER III

A YEAR and a half Alwin Beegen passed in Los Angeles. It was an interlude. From the first, when he felt the influence of the distracting greenery of the place, and the insouciance of the languid yellow sunlight, he knew that all the time he passed in Los Angeles would be but an interlude. It was all a little too easy, a little too pliant, and Alwin saw that his restlessness would never be brought to quietude there. So at the end of the year and a half, at four o'clock one afternoon, he went into the office to report to work and told the city editor of the morning newspaper that had hired him, that he had decided to quit. At the time he could not give a very good reason, and Coleman, who was handing out assignments, and answering telephones, merely told him to reconsider and handed him five assignments without any further apparent interest.

A week later Alwin quit—definitely, but not as forcefully as he had desired. He merely told Coleman that he felt he had got into a rut. He had not defiantly enough hurled out his belief in himself as he had done when he had quit Salt Lake. At first Los Angeles was new to him and for some time he was afraid of it. But gradually he had come to "place" the people around him and he saw how people were. There were the young fellows scurrying futilely around, pecking out insignificant news stories on rattling typewriters, hurrying out of the office to interview locally important persons on a story of paper policy. And there were the desk men, the department people and the eventual copy-readers—nightlings brooding over potential libel, paragraphs and punctuation, their bald heads indecently glistening under the shaded yellow lights. . . .

"I'm in a rut," he explained, when Coleman asked him what he meant by quitting.

"Want more money?" Coleman asked.

"I want to leave town."

Alwin left on a steamer the next afternoon, and the following morning he was



swinging up the main street of San Francisco, jostling his valise through briskly energized human beings who were moving with the rapidity of animated bugs. He inflated his chest in the face of a wind that whipped along the pavements and challenged him to show his courage.

"I was right—right!" he exclaimed. He felt unusually keyed up. The clatter of the four green cars clashing along their four tracks on Market street seemed a banging out of great rhythms. . . . "This is the place!"

He was thinking of the arguments that Coleman had put up to keep him on the paper: How hard it was to get on that particular paper; what a future there was in Los Angeles. (Future—bah! A petty job, that was it.) He was not going to be tied down, grooved into a rut. He had not told Coleman of the important restlessness in him that meant something, of his ambitions yet only vaguely sensed.

"Rut"—was an understandable term. There would be no groove in San Francisco. Here he could do things "on the side": music, verses, stories, playlets—smoothed-out, beautifully worded lines and rhythms, expressive of everything within him. Here he could embody gropings. Here would be a multitude of impressions—smooth things—here he could translate himself upward to the very heights.

He took a cable car on a flat-wheeled journey up a hill, and wound out to highlands overlooking the bay. The wind had cleared the air, making far horizons cleanly visible. The blue sky, the blue bay, slow white ships moving by, white-caps dancing, the embroidery of the surf along the Marin county shore—the salt air's challenge. He saw and sensed all these, and then he wandered back down the hills to the clatter of Market street where a few days later, to get bread and butter, he took a job on a morning paper.

And there, after a few weeks, Alwin Beegen saw that it was much the same in San Francisco's newspaper world as

it was in Los Angeles or in the Salt Lake City he had fled from. The same petty tales of woe to write about. The same words to use. The same heaps of papers on the desks. The same smells. The dim lights. The same phrases to start off a murder, to sketch out a suicide. The same rich men, with other names, coming into print with their photographs in conspicuous places when they did things. And the same flat-faced under-educated girls, obtaining divorces for ostensibly bizarre reasons, and meeting their miserable pictures over stories of how their husbands would not let them roll their socks. . . . But he could tolerate it all. He was above these things. And he would be repaid eventually for keeping himself intact, for having high desires, for hoping to help make life sometime vaguely but gloriously smooth. . . .

#### CHAPTER IV

BEEGEN rented himself a cheap room on Hyde street that looked out on a red brick wall. In the room were a bed, two chairs and a scratched, red-varnished dresser which he covered with books. The yellow-kalsomined walls he adorned with three prints he had bought in Los Angeles and which he had had framed at a Post street shop. One was a colored English reproduction of Waterhouse's "Echo and Narcissus," and the other a companion print, "Hylno and the Nymphs"; the third was a black and white photograph of the Canova group of Cupid and Psyche. He kept the violin in a corner.

The time in Los Angeles had taught Alwin Beegen some things. He knew something now, in a vague way, about girls. There he had met two, one a stenographer and the other a clerk in the city hall. His relationships with both had been casual, unsatisfactorily platonic. The stenographer he had accredited with a keen mind at first because she mentioned the title of a book which once he had been much moved by. So he took her out to dinner twice and to a theatre twice only to find that



she did not understand what the book was about, and requested that the next time instead of a theatre they go to the beach . . . and that, of course, marked her off his list. The yellow-haired girl clerk and he walked through interminable twilights and moonlights until Alwin Beegen at last had somehow tired, restlessly conscious that he ought to be devoting his time to something more important. . . . He was twenty-two and time was going.

He never mentioned to anyone in Los Angeles or in the San Francisco office that he wrote verses, or that he had ambitions, or played the violin. Turner was the only one who knew these things—it was part of a bond between them. And in Los Angeles Turner, who had left Salt Lake when Beegen left, had been working days and Beegen nights, so that they seldom saw each other.

When he left Los Angeles, Alwin looked up Turner, and Turner said:

"It is advisable, as I have said before,"—always a precise cuss in his speech, he was—"not to get married."

Turner was forty, and had never married.

"I have rejected advice equally good," said Alwin Beegen.

He knew what marriage was, however. They laughed and shook hands, and Alwin Beegen felt curiously that this was the end of their friendship. And it was a little too bad. He owed Turner a lot, ideas, the gratitude of a pupil to a mentor. Turner was like him, somehow. Certainly, he was *not* like Williams or Alwin Beegen's father, or Coleman, even. . . .

Alwin found that the way to get along in a newspaper office, and probably any place else, was to ostentatiously "join in." In a newspaper office this consisted of taking a drink and telling about it, and taking a woman and inventing tellable tales around it. To confess that these two things did not essentially interest one for their own sake, to confess having any ambition that could not at once be translated into money, a better

job, a drink, or a woman, was to be looked upon as "highbrowing," or to be suspected of not being "one of the boys."

Doubtless, Alwin thought, as he looked up from his desk in a corner and watched the men in the office, these fellows had forgotten that once they wrote verses, too. At other times, he wondered, though, if these fellows ever had written verses, if, indeed, they had ever even attempted to relate their inner life—if they had such a thing—to anything other than liquor and women and the attendant stories of both. And once he sensed himself boiling up in protest, and he wanted to go over to the copy desk, where in a slack few minutes of the day Clark was loudly telling of a wild party and wild babies and the ecstasies of the previous evening, and he wanted to smash his fists down on the desk and say:

"Damn you all—with your flesh propaganda—damn you! That isn't all there is in life! There is something else. Something else!"

But it was a ridiculous idea—and when he inspected it carefully he saw what it would mean: Simply that he would be cursing out these fellows for denying a merely hypothetical truth, the actual existence of which he already began partially to doubt. . . .

But while he continued to wonder, he kept silent about his own activities, although in so doing he began to feel at times disturbed under the introspective eye which he fastened upon himself. Possibly it was not a really masculine thing—fiddle playing—verse writing—groping—attempting to see things in terms of tactile smoothness—to give off the world in other sense forms as smoothed out expressions. It was no rational ambition. But he was different, inherently and consciously. He liked smooth things—and he always would—and others didn't.

Once, talking popular music, a brother reporter asked Alwin Beegen if he "played anything." Alwin said he "carted around an old fiddle with him



that he sometimes harped on—now and then.” He preferred the word violin, but “fiddle” to these querists, who approached him diffidently at best, suggested vaudevillian antics which at times they had applauded, and if they could but classify him there, Alwin thought, he would be forgiven, even slightly esteemed, and not considered in any way out of place. He never mentioned poetry; it, he had observed, always occasioned smiles that were oddly both tolerant and superior.

He thought about all these things as he walked up and down the San Francisco streets, as he had wandered through the sunnier and more yellowish streets of Los Angeles. The walks, in a way, were preparation: as he strode along he debated the things he should do. Here and there he observed with a satisfied eye the colored, smooth things in the art stores, the intriguing flashes of colored opals in a Grant street jeweler’s window.

On these strolls, he was always freshly shaven, and he usually felt a little conscious of himself, his singularity, his aloofness from the world, as if he were somehow like his grandfather who, years before, had walked down the long days with his top hat, four overcoats and cane. . . . At times he felt himself shuddering slightly at the many beggars that he passed, the crippled and the blind at the corners, the old, jerkily walking men with the indecent looking faces.

“Life has done *that* to them,” he thought. “That is what living does.”

And he felt, then, a little proud of himself, of his youth, his cleanness, his smooth hands, his smooth cheeks, his young body, his carefully selected clothes, his general appearance, and he wondered if any of the girls or the women he looked at noticed him, particularly. . . . He decided he did not care much, one way or the other, and that he would see that this year amounted to something. He would do a great deal of writing in San Francisco. It was not like Los Angeles, in which

the most enjoyable mood was one of speculative idleness— But first it was plainly advisable simply to relax until the newness of the town wore off. . . .

## CHAPTER V

. . . AND then Alwin Beegen became conscious of a girl who did stenographic work for the managing editor. Her name was Margaret. Charming dactylic—the name. Later, when he analyzed things, he reflected that he had been attracted to her by the external fact that she wore a black tricollette dress, and he had watched it ripple about her as she walked past his desk into old man Gyer’s private office. . . . Waves billowing on a black, smooth sea. . . .

In a month, Alwin Beegen had taken her twice to the Maitland, where they saw an Oscar Wilde play and a green-faced youth in “Ghosts.” He felt that Margaret did not enjoy these productions much, and that she seemed to have a better time when they went to Bigin’s café, a place at Pacific and Columbus which newspaper men and their girls frequented. After a few cups of red wine, Alwin staggered his best through a waltz in the little square spot reserved for that purpose. Above the singing of a weird saxophone and the rattle-tinkle of Guelda’s piano-playing, he became aware then of how very black and thick was this young girl’s hair. Once when they were dancing, the fragrance of it rushed through him like a spring wind laden with flower-scent. . . .

Margaret *was* pretty to look at. But while Alwin admired her, he sensed too, that she was not quite complete. She was not very “well read,” one might have said. But he decided not to analyze her very closely, because he had done that with two girls in Los Angeles and his conclusions, he recalled, had wiped them both off his list. Girls, of course, were not really expected to be very intelligent. Meanwhile he told her vast things about himself, as they sat across from each other, how much he expected



to do for himself, how much he expected to be; how the "full, smooth music" of Saint-Saëns expressed him, how Corot subdued him. And Margaret Mitchell listened with a simple gravity that pleased Alwin immensely.

In the subsequent days, he learned all about Margaret Mitchell—that she was alone in San Francisco, boarding at some elderly woman's house on Pine street, and that her father was in Everett, Washington, and her mother in Philadelphia, separated from Mr. Mitchell, but not divorced; and that Margaret had got tired of Everett, and her father had let her come to San Francisco, where she had found herself the present job. She did not smoke, and Alwin discovered that she had been a little too timid about "going out" with men in San Francisco. It was a good thing, he thought. He felt that she was a very important young woman in his life. Doubtless, in this crazy day and age, you would not find many like her.

In the sixth week of their acquaintance, he suggested that they go to the Maitland again. Shaw was there.

And she exclaimed:

"Oh, is *he* in town?"

But when Alwin that night, at the office, analyzed it carefully, and looked up the population of Everett, Wash., he pardoned Margaret Mitchell for not knowing more about the life and eccentricities of Mr. G. Bernard Shaw. He understood. Margaret would learn, doubtless. For Margaret Mitchell was only twenty, and when Alwin Beegen considered this, he pardoned lots of things. Indeed, in some ways, Margaret now was almost a commonplace person—in some ways, that was. But not when it came to her smooth cheeks and her quiet eyes, and all that.

Alwin Beegen felt himself drawn to her in spite of all his intellectualizing. There was her hair, too. He recalled her hair at odd moments, and he caught his eyes wandering, then, at times, over his hands, his finger tips. What a sensation—to run his fingers through those long, black strands!

Alwin felt she indulged the idea that he liked smooth things. She virtually said so one day when, in one of his moods of buying, he had purchased a Rookwood vase of a soft, pink tone, the lips of which opened up from a rising body that seemed the very embodiment of rhythmical smoothness. He showed it to Margaret Mitchell in the filing room of the office, when no one was around, and then carefully rewrapped it and took the vase to his room.

"You've got a peach of a taste," she said.

It pleased Alwin Beegen. Here was a person who approved of his tastes. He had known it all along. She was, indeed, the only one in the office to whom he would have thought of showing the vase. He could see, clearly, he told himself, how the minds of the men around him worked. They were like all the rest of the people of the world—except him—coarse sensualists, men dragged down. In Salt Lake, even, they were no worse than here. They had no regard, for instance, for smoothness. Their tastes had not originated in their hands and smoothed out to affect their reactions to things of beauty.

Something had brought them down, and now they embraced the commonplaceness of the wretched. Possibly it was because their contact with life was too direct. There was with them too close a brush with life, with jobs, with wives, with the rush of Market street traffic—the abominable and unfeeling clash of the Market street trolley cars, crashing down the street two abreast on one side, and two abreast crashing up the street back from the Ferry Building. Perhaps these "men brought down" ate too much—as all San Francisco did, Alwin thought. They *lived* too fast. They spoke too openly of their mistresses, and called love by words of ungodly grossness. They spat. They hawked; and twee-ed. . . . He almost feared these fellows—and wondered why.

When Alwin Beegen had known Margaret Mitchell two months, she became



a problem that worried him. She interfered with his doing big things on the side; he thought too constantly of her. When he did not see her in the office, he kept looking up from his desk, wondering where she was. He began seeing girls on the street who looked like her from the side, or whose hats were like Margaret's hat, or who walked like her. . . . On his afternoon strolls, he read her eyes into the shop windows and wondered what she would think of that picture, or whether she would like him to buy her this or that. . . .

One morning, as he was walking back and forth in his room, his hand flying over his cheek and chin, he became conscious that he was thinking all the time of Margaret Mitchell, that he was probably, even then, *in love*. It was not what he had intended happening. That, of course, meant marriage. . . . So he said "Good morning" to her when he saw her in the afternoon—which is the casual custom in morning newspaper offices where, for the sake of conventional greetings, it is morning until dark. And on his night off, a few days later, he wandered down Post street by himself.

He became extremely discouraged. He was foolish to have given up Margaret. Life was always forcing him to make unpleasant decisions. He began to envy couples passing by him arm in arm, and stopping to gaze into the windows of furniture stores. And then a mist that had been hanging over the city broke into a fine, filtering rain. It was the kind of night, he thought, when a man should be indoors, with Margaret, indoors with deep, soft chairs, dim lights, a fire in an open hearth, the rich suffusing smell of "Margie's" hair . . . and the distant patter of rain drops. By God, what a place they could fix up together!

A few days later, Alwin struck up an acquaintance with a reporter who wanted a partner for golf. The reporter had been married and divorced, and had no illusions about things. Golf was a silly game. But it kept him from thinking of Margaret Mitchell during the part

of the day he was not at work, Alwin told himself. It would keep him from thinking of her smooth cheeks and her hair and quiet eyes. He was aware that he was lying. But he knew that if he went out any more with Margaret Mitchell, he would marry her. What would Turner think of that, when he answered Turner's last letter—Turner who had held up a mirror of high desires to be followed to distant goals? Well. . . .

So he played golf. On the way to the links one morning, the reporter came up to Alwin's room to rouse him out of bed, and while Alwin was pulling on old clothes, the fellow amused himself studying the pictures on the wall.

He walked around the room remarking with a fleshy appreciation of the contours of the nymphs, viewing the picture closely, from distant angles, expressing the attitude of a connoisseur, not of art but of figures. He told a story of a girl he had kissed once. The girl looked like one of the nymphs—the blonde one, he said. And at the sight of Cupid and Psyche, he observed significantly: "That's a good place to hold a girl when you kiss her." Whereupon, he told another story of a girl, and that suggested another he had not told for some time. And as he laced his shoes Alwin laughed, because it was expected of him.

But when he returned to his room that afternoon, Alwin looked again at the pictures on his walls. Lyrical impressions of a very precious thing, an intangible, smooth, quieting quality, he had once thought them. He wondered. Life, doubtless—when you got right down to it—was just about like that, as the divorced fellow had said. It was not a very poetical matter, then. It was flesh and food and jobs and fat bellies and wenches; or jobs and fat wives and kids; or a square room and stillness and a vast, disquieting emptiness that cried through the dark.

Alwin Beegen considered the reporter's case. He had a number of "girls," and a classy apartment on Bush street.



"I wouldn't marry again," the reporter said, "but, boy, I wouldn't trade that experience for the world."

Alwin Beegen had tentatively debated getting a classy apartment on Bush street for himself, because after a few months in San Francisco, he saw that was how the young single people in San Francisco lived. It didn't agree with what they did in Utah, but he was no Utahn—no typical Utahn—underneath. He was no stodgy, house-dweller, settled down and dragged out. But still—this San Francisco arrangement—. It seemed a little tarnished, not quite clean, as if it would dirty the hands—violate a viewpoint—put disgusting lines in the face. It would bring a person down, break him— It was out of the question.

## CHAPTER VI

ALWIN BEEGEN continued his long daily walks up Stockton and Geary and Post streets, looking complacently into the windows as he had done for weeks. He was in the middle of a poem, one which should be several hundred lines in length, and one which required subtle indefiniteness of mood. He had received an encouraging letter from an eastern magazine in connection with other verse he had sent out.

But it was a difficult mood to attain—this—a mood in which there should be no flesh descents, no real, tangible earthliness, and it was only at infrequent intervals that he could sufficiently sense the mood to catch it, and express it. But when he did he saw that this was what had been growing up in him, that this was the fragile flowering of the budding things inside. And there was to be more and more flowering, too. It was all a part of that old desire for smooth, intangible things, Alwin recognized, and the strolls began again to have their old philosophical, lonely significance, and he saw life as delightfully smooth things safely removed behind shop windows.

He had gone back to Margaret, as if nothing had occurred, and he felt better now. He had explained his apparently

having been a little distant for a time by a simple statement of how busy a man he was.

In the windows, on his walks, there were many smooth things, Alwin observed—tall vases, glistening bric-à-brac, languorous silks and satins, satins charmeuse, brocades, plushes, velvets; crêpe de Chine suggestive of Margaret and smoother possibilities than any satins, silks or velvets; chiffons, peach-colored taffeta, tricolette, tricotine, tubed silks, pongee, foulards. . . . New fields of smoothness opened for Alwin Beegen, and he pictured Margaret Mitchell begowned as a queen in these soft, touchable cloths—how her young warm arms would feel to his cool hands as they wandered lazily down a satined sleeve.

Alwin Beegen felt himself arriving at a decision. But he hesitated. Marriage was marriage, and it meant something. It meant a great many not altogether pleasant things. He would have to work like the devil; no more philosophical, brooding, leisure time. Probably always a job. . . . Still, he considered, it would keep him from wandering around. It would make him work. He would do something then really important. Countless men who did things were married—many great literary men, artists, poets, musicians. He tried to recall the names of some particular literary men, but for the moment could think of no one but H. G. Wells and Wells' tribute somewhere to the helpfulness of his wife. Possibly, Margaret would be a great help, too. True, now she did not know much about literature or about persons who wrote or those who sang or played or painted, but a few days ago she commented on a book and Alwin had noticed it was a book he had recommended. It was encouraging when a girl started reading the books a man talks about.

He hesitated, but within himself, he was quite firmly decided, he believed. His hesitation was natural enough when he thought of marriage. He had always hesitated about girls, hesitated taking them to dances, hesitated so long he had forgotten what the style of dancing was,



hesitated until he had been cheated out of girl companionship and had had to take to other things, to work, to walking alone and to hating people. That's what hesitation did.

What was there in singleness, anyway, he wondered? Lonesomeness. That was all. A square room. And if anyone came into it, finding it attractively furnished, filled with smooth pillows, hangings and pictures, the owner was suspected of something or other. He felt the reporter had rather suspected him. . . . Men did not like things like that. They liked rough surfaces, hard beds, ungloved hands, wind on their hairy chests.

Alwin Beegen often considered this particular matter in the privacy of his room, after returning from his daily strolls. He wondered at his own oddness, and questioned whether some day his own tastes would not master him—whether his very desire for smooth things would not make him effeminate—an ungodly thing to happen! . . . make him contemptible to men. He had read medical reports of strange perversions. Being alone so much, one could never tell what queer misshapen ghosts might come creeping up into the mind and sit there, crowding out all things else. Perhaps his liking for smooth things was a symptom of something unnatural. . . . But he considered this as a joke on himself a little later, as if he had grown afraid of his own resolve—the resolve he had made back in Utah, that his desire for smooth things would keep him above the common oafs and plugs in the harness.

"To hell with 'em," he said to himself before the bureau glass one day. "To hell with 'em." And he meant the world in toto. That was the way he felt. He was a man. And standing there, he began again to contemplate himself through the reflected image of the long, uncertain youth that gazed back upon the yellow walls of the room.

His eyes, he noticed, were beginning to show his thoughts on life—they were beginning to look tired-out, worried;

red lines were etched against the white. Once the whites had been perfectly clean, he remembered, and the blue of the pupils perfectly blue. He looked at his forehead and wrinkled it up to see if the lines that crossed it had grown quite straight. They had not; the lowest of the three bars broke and one end went up and one end went down. It was extremely discouraging. His hand flew up and brushed his cheek and crept around his smoothly shaven chin. He watched his hands. . . . Smoothness—he thought, . . . and recalled now when first he had discovered that he was going to take great care of his hands. It was in the summer of his seventeenth year, coincidental with the purchase of the second tube of camphor ice.

Alwin opened the red bureau drawer, and removed now from under a pile of rejected poems, letters from his mother, hotel receipts and magazines, a tube of camphor ice. Abstractedly he rubbed a little of the salve on the back of his hands and contemplated his fingers thoughtfully. . . . He had been "caught" at this last summer. . . . He remembered his mother's coming into the room and her memorable remark.

"Are your hands chapped," she asked, "in the *summer*?"

Alwin knew what people thought about his hands—his long, white, smooth hands that he liked and he knew it would not sound reasonable to say that he liked his hands to be always exquisitely smooth—that the salve did that—that they were *not* chapped. . . . He noticed his mother looking at his hands and smiling. He rather thought even then that she approved his hands, that probably she expected him to be that way—smooth, somehow. But he did not know, and so he had acted a little sullen and defiant.

He had picked up a book and turned his back, he remembered.

"I don't like 'em rough," he said. And that was all.

But when his mother had gone out of his room, he began to feel for a little while as if he were guilty of something, as if he had been detected in something



not quite manly, as if it were not right to have smooth hands. . . . Later Turner was the only one who could see into this sense perception, he recalled—cynical, sentimental Turner, single, bitter, kind-hearted, groping. Turner had been out of place in Salt Lake. Alwin recalled that Turner was no longer in Salt Lake, that now in that city there were only people there, no "persons"; Turner had been the last. Now there were only Brickles, and Timmons, Davis and old man Williams; all that gang of pudgy-handed men. Good newspaper men, maybe; good-hearted, doubtless, but—how far Turner had been above them all, and "how far," Alwin Beegen thought, "have I climbed above them, beyond question."

And so Alwin Beegen considered men and women and life, and in reflection on his own problem, wondered what there was in life, after all—what there was in books, jobs, money. And he saw that men forewent these things and followed the course that carried them to women. For, after all, all men went to women, eventually, for one thing or another. In Utah they went because they wanted a house and a wife and kids. In larger places, a wife was someone to have at your elbow when you were invited out, a companion for social affairs. There were lots of reasons, and in this way Alwin Beegen selected one which should apply to his case. He chose for himself a reason why he should marry, a reason which should be acceptable to his upward strivings, and to the few friends who would raise their eyebrows at learning of a step apparently so unlike his nature. It was a characteristic reason. And it pleased him.

When it came to him, as he walked back and forth in his room, he stopped his pacing suddenly, turned to the mirror of the bureau and told himself what he would do. He looked himself squarely in the eye, and then as if he saw there a wavering he clasped his right hand tightly, shot out his jaw, and then smashed his fist on the bureau, as dramatically as he could.

"I'm going to do it," he said.

And when he had said it, he was conscious that a load had been lifted; he was decided. He was tired of resisting himself, as he had been resisting himself; he was tired of his room, of his insufferable self.

"I'll ask her," he concluded.

And so on his night off, Wednesday, he asked her, having taken her out to a convenient place for the purpose, where Fort Scott looks through trees and trellises into a moonlit bay, and on clear nights the world is twinkling off somewhere neither too near nor too utterly far away. It was very still.

He kissed her several times, and Margaret Mitchell, who had let him kiss her several times before, did not resist, as he knew she would not. Then his hands touched her cheeks, smoothing the warm surface with cool finger tips, softly.

"You are smooth," he said, and continued brushing her cheek, pretending to himself that his hands were very small winds. It amused him to think that.

When he asked her if she would marry him, she showed no surprise, but asked:

"Do you really love me?"

Alwin Beegen had seen the question on the printed page. But it rather startled him when it came now to his ears. Love. . . . He supposed that was what it was, all right.

"Yes," he said. "Of course . . ."

He knew then that he could never tell Margie how things were, could never explain to her as he had planned explaining them cleverly in a letter to Turner in Los Angeles. But that was how life was. He would have to "join in" with his wife, probably, as he had had to pretend "joining in" with the people in the office. He remembered how he had walked up and down his room, and had stopped triumphantly before his mirrored reflection when he had made up his mind to marry, to marry because he had figured out a very clever reason for his act; and now he had regretted that there was no one present to whom he



could tell it. At any rate, he would stick by his reason, he thought, and he kissed Margie again. Turner would appreciate its cleverness. . . . He would write to Turner tomorrow.

## CHAPTER VII

MARGARET quit her job and they moved into a three-room apartment on Taylor street, which was rather small, however expensive, but which Margaret said she adored. Alwin realized that she adored a number of things—chiefly him. He had about decided that he had succeeded as a husband and was surprised to find how much he knew about being a husband, how much he had stored away in the back of his head on what was expected of a husband, how much he had read preparing himself to be one. It was the way he had planned it, he concluded, a little pleased that practically anything he did was all right. That was success there, he concluded, and it satisfied him for a time.

Sometimes at night, he wondered, though, if he were altogether satisfied. Perhaps, he debated, it was the town. He was tired of it. Perhaps the sameness of his job. Possibly the apartment, which he felt was terribly cramped. It was almost as if it were pressing in on one. Somehow or other, he felt he wanted open spaces—which was as near as he could get to wording things—wind on his chest, big rhythms. . . . Some splendidly lonely isolation . . . something that he had known vaguely once before. When he analyzed it, he laughed and said: "That, doubtless, you might say, is the pull of my ancestors. Pioneers. The smell of the soil, or something. The call of Utah. And all quite ridiculous."

At night, when Margaret was asleep, he would reach out and touch her, touching her so lightly as not to waken her, and then in the comforting assurance of physical nearness to life, the chill, small thoughts fled out of his mind, and he would sleep.

And then an external thing, in a few

months, occurred which Alwin Beegen had not expected. He lost his job. Two protégées of old man Gyer finished their school work at Berkeley and the managing editor made room for them on the staff, and because Beegen was the last to be hired, he was the first to be fired. That, Beegen knew, was the newspaper business. He had seen this happen to others, and he had gone on tapping out sentences in his dim corners, unmindful, and detached from it all. When he walked up Taylor street the afternoon they handed him the significant letter and the check, the novelty of its having happened to him occurred to him.

"Now it's me," he said, again and again. "This is happening to me!"

And for a time he felt very strange about having lost his job, and being married, and it seemed to him that the person experiencing all these things was not actually he, himself, but some person with whom he must acquaint himself. . . . Later he became disgusted at the treatment that had been accorded him by the paper that had discharged him, and he went around to the other newspaper offices. But there he found that no one knew him in these offices, and there were no jobs. If he had been in Salt Lake, he reflected, he wouldn't have been begging for a job. They would have been hopping after him the moment he had even thought about quitting.

It gave him an idea, and he wired back to Heal, on the *Telegram*, and he and Margaret discussed, for three or four days, the next step in their married life.

## CHAPTER VIII

THE day of the decision, Alwin Beegen was curiously elated, and that evening insisted that he and Margaret should dine out—a kind of celebration. The decision satisfied him, as if he had known for a long time that it was the decision he would make, but had merely hesitated accepting it. He felt as if a load had been lifted, as he had felt when he had decided about Margaret. They



dined, went to a theatre, and returned to their apartment.

And then, after he had chatted with Margaret until she had gone to sleep, Alwin Beegen began to stare up at the ceiling and to wonder why he could not sleep. Everything was settled. There was nothing, now, to worry about. He had decided, and Margaret had acceded, almost joyfully. He began to think of the telegram he had received from Heal and the answer he had wired back, and that tomorrow morning they would be leaving town. Well, he reflected, they would be out of this terribly tiny apartment. There they could get themselves a real home, rent a bungalow on South State street, a clean, yellow-brick little house with a front yard and a back yard. Possibly, within a short time, they would have need of a yard. San Francisco, with its flat-faced apartments, towering over car tracks, was no place, certainly, for children, just in case. . . .

He tried to remember the town as he had left it—Salt Lake with its wide, barren streets, dirty with December snow piles, a wind filled with frost and smoke whipping around a building, and at the north the white stone capitol crouched upon the hill boldly looking down into the valley—behind the capitol the rolling rhythm of the northern hills. They would be fine in the spring—these hills—Alwin thought. It was February now. In April they would be overrun with millions of tiny pink flowers, growing so close together the slopes would be awash with a flesh tint. He could feel the rhythms of these hills rolling through him as he thought of them—feeling them waving up to crests and gliding down like smooth music.

He thought of his mother as she used to rock on the front porch, watching these hills. That seemed quite a long time ago. He remembered that she had said once they looked like hills in Germany . . . Germany! It started his mind upon world travels—traveling he had dimly counted on once, traveling which should take place some time when, single, famous and rich, he would en-

compass the world; the streets of Berlin, the boulevards of Paris—looking into the beer palaces of Munich, wandering over Switzerland, dreamily resting in Florence, drinking a discreet amount of gin with English gentlemen in wicker chairs at Shanghai. . . . How close he had been once to all these things, he thought. What a lot of roads there were in life to choose from.

Often he had thought about this when he had walked the streets of San Francisco or Los Angeles or Salt Lake, he remembered—watching faces blur by him, men and women, men, men, women and women, men, women, men, men, men. . . . And he had felt that he could brush them all by, plough through them, almost by the expedient of extending his arms suddenly behind himself and pushing through them, upward . . . onward. . . . It was a curious feeling.

"It was a crazy feeling," he whispered, momentarily surprised that he had said this aloud.

And then his mind flew back to his room in Salt Lake and the unquestionable normality of his old life back there. His mother would be glad to see him home, he thought. He would have to take her some things—something from San Francisco. His father, some cigars, and probably a bottle of white wine.

Alwin recalled the bust of the little Italian girl on his desk at home, and all his stray thoughts grooved into a memory of what he had been once, seven years ago. He smiled. That had been like him then, he thought—trundling home a statue of a girl, infatuated with it because it seemed an embodiment of something smooth. Smooth things! Then he had had the courage to resist life, to pull himself up, to force his feelings to catch hold of intangible, beautiful things. As he stared at the ceiling, Alwin Beegen thus looked at his life.

Where, he wondered, were all those upward strivings of his earlier years—of the five years he had studied the violin in the vast ambition to become as great as Kreisler. Now he seldom played at all. What of the verses he had set about



so earnestly to write? When would he finish the long poem he was sure would be accepted by the Eastern editor who had written him once? What of his ambition to smooth out lines and words of prose, to build up castles of words which should stand out brilliantly as something he had done, things created altogether beautiful and expressive of his inner self? What of these desires for smooth things?

He must not now relinquish these things. He would not. He could manage them all now. He was married now; he need no longer think always of his loneliness, his "indifference," and the necessity for being different. He would have time now to write. Alwin Beegen's hand flew up and brushed his cheek and when it fell back, it touched the shoulder of Margaret. The touch brought him back to other considerations. His hand stole up and touched her cheek, smoothing back her hair gently. Here was life that was tangible.

"I'm a fool," Alwin Beegen thought, "to worry about it all."

And tingling inward through his hands, a glowing warmth diffused in him.

"Things started from my hands," Alwin Beegen said, and he was thinking of all the gropings in his lifetime. "And now they have come back to my hands."

He said this, and then suddenly, with a sense of ecstasy, he saw that this was so, and that this desire for smooth things was still important in his nature. He thought of the letter he had intended to write to Turner, and that shortly he would get to writing it. He remembered the reason he was going to give to Turner for his marriage—it was a good reason—that he had married Margaret Mitchell because marriage offered an excuse for possessing smooth things, that married he could buy beautiful things, soft, smooth, vague, indefinite things, ostensibly for Margaret, which he, himself, of course, would most enjoy. He had felt that this was a consistent reason for his marriage, one consonant with his desire for smooth things, that

it followed logically all the actions in his life that were internally important, the purchase of the little Italian girl, his desire to keep his hands smooth, his tastes in music, his desire for soft, pleasing clothes, his desire to write poetry, his affection for the indefinable, recumbent luxuriousness of sleeping hills, his visual feasts on window goods.

It was a reason which Alwin Beegen told himself was at once consistent with his upward strivings and clever and distinctive. But, when he analyzed how it would appeal, as a reason, to other persons he would meet, he wondered now, a little. He thought of his going back to Salt Lake City. Old Man Williams surely would be surprised to see *him* married.

"Married, eh?" he would say.

Alwin could see him, as he would look up sidewise as he sat humped over the copy desk bitterly snipping his life away.

"Married, eh?" a little sarcastically.

Then he would probably say,

"You must not have had a very good time in Frisco—wasn't there anything else to do?"

Alwin found himself imputing similar speeches to others in the *Telegram* office—to Davis, who had married the telephone operator and who, Alwin knew, would certainly not say anything like that; he would just think things like that.

Well, he *was* married—four months married, and Alwin Beegen knew why he had married. He was no coarse, damned sensualist like the rest of them. He made no dirty jokes about things. He even loved his wife, beyond question he loved her. She was something smooth, smoother than anything he had ever found, smoother than music, than poetry, than art, or the banal life around him . . . smooth . . . flesh. Alwin's hand touched his wife's arm, and as the gradual warmth flowed through him, a familiar drifting sensation suffused him, contenting him, calming him. His fingers slid down her arm and as they touched the palm of her hand, he felt for a flashed instant an odd sensation of ex-



periencing something that might have happened once before, an indefinable, uncatchable sensation. . . . Margaret's hand—her smooth white hand. . . . Turner's hands were something like that in texture. . . . That was funny. . . . The universality of flesh, of smooth flesh. . . . Yes, he loved his wife, beyond question he loved her. . . . Why? Alwin Beegen wondered, and while he wondered he realized that he knew.

There was now no further reason for battling against life. Here lay life, the personification of the intangible things that he sought, smoother, more beautiful than anything he had ever found. He could no longer fool himself with words; no clever reason obscured the Alwin Beegen who saw himself staring at the things within him. *This* was all . . . and in the knowledge Alwin Beegen, seeing his formula for an escape from life had brought him cycling back to life, saw all his gropings dwindling oddly away—fiddle notes dying on the empty air, words of verse silencing themselves.

"Tastes," he thought. "You've got a peach of a taste!"

That was what Margaret had said.

Margaret used words like that—Margaret was the wife *he* had chosen and, whatever love was, she loved him, she would stick by him, and he would want her to stick by him. . . . She would go with him to Salt Lake; they would get themselves a little yellow, square brick house and Margie would wear house-dresses, get acquainted with the neighbors, cook, and every night he would come home from work, tired out, unbearably tired out, gray-faced, and Margie would grow a little stouter, a little fatter, and the kids' faces would be dirty—children crying. . . . Domesticity was crying children. . . .

Salt Lake. . . . The pattern formed itself in Alwin Beegen's mind. The gray people passing by, the city room of the *Telegram*. It was not that Alwin was afraid of the *Telegram* office. He was afraid of everything, of all the chains of life, and the knowledge that he could no longer jump up, smash his

fist upon the table, and run up into the heights, and away.

It was the fear of recognition, of recognition that his groping nature now was harnessed. The external irony of it came to him. For now, Alwin Beegen thought, he would soon be cocking his feet upon the desk and ripping out rotten stories like the rest of them, a little surprised at how many he had stored away in the back of his head for just such an occasion, for such a time of life. And he knew he would think then that this was life, and this was how he had planned it, a long way back—had planned sitting all through the winter in the dimly lit city room at the job he had accepted from Heal—editing copy, snipping away all day long, cutting and pasting and rewriting heads on stories that other persons had written. This came of marriage—this came of accepting life. It meant the loss of himself—the loss of Alwin Beegen, and the loss of those grave gropings that had played over his nature through the years. . . .

Alwin Beegen clenched his hands—and when his mind centered on his fists, in the accumulating force of the idea, he saw himself dragged down, not alone by the external things of life he had attempted to reject, not alone by the necessities of jobs, or towns and places, but dragged down by his own self, by the smooth things he had liked—by Margaret Mitchell, whom he had married only because she was the smoothest thing he had ever known—brought down to life by his own hands, his own tastes, his own sensibilities—married—jobbed—commoned—sensualized!

Alwin Beegen wrestled with his soul.

"Caught, by God!" he said, aloud. "Caught!"

And then he turned on his side and faced the wall. His hands were doubled up in hard, lumped knots, and when at last the tight strings within him loosened, his hands hurt, as if they had been crushed in the ponderous mouth of a great vise, and he stared then for a long time at the wall before he relaxed into sleep.

[The End]



# The Soul of Man Under Prohibition

*By Andre Saville*

I  
"I can deliver it for a hundred a case."

II  
"Drink it fast and throw the bottle under the table."

III  
"Knock three times and ask for Kelly. Tell him you're a friend of mine."

IV  
"Give me a ticket to Montreal."

V  
"Crime Wave Spreads Throughout Country."

VI  
"Oh, let's finish the quart. You can't

tell when we'll get another chance."

VII  
"Mr. Frederick Williamson regrets that he will be unable to accept Mrs. Carteret's invitation to dinner on Thursday—"

VIII  
"Go to - - - , you - - - - -  
- - - - - !"

IX  
"Prohibition Costs City \$69,000,000."

X  
"Jones, Henry, beloved husband of Martha, suddenly on May 20. Notice of funeral later."



## On Miracles

*By John Russell McCarthy*

OUT of the dust  
Comes a maiden dancing,  
Out of the rock  
Gleams columbine.

Who then shall ask  
For magic or wonder,  
Who shall demand  
Of the Lord a sign?





# Piano

*By J. K. Nicholson and S. N. Behrman*

## I

**B**EN HALLETT sat on the cot-bed and surveyed his tiny room with satisfaction. The feat of miniature engineering which he had just performed pleased him. He had that day rented a piano—the smallest upright he could find—and he had cleared a space along the wall into which the instrument would exactly fit.

To make room for the piano had required a skill almost lapidary in the re-arrangement of Hallett's belongings. The small tabouret on which rested his graphophone had to be discarded. The graphophone itself was placed on the dresser. The dresser had to be put in the narrow space between the foot of the cot and the door. This, in turn, had necessitated the entire transplanting of the improvised wardrobe to which Hallett had devoted that corner. He had now to rig up the rods from which the orange terrycloth curtains depended in the corner opposite the head of the cot. Which had, of course, been preceded by the re-hanging of the numerous artworks with which the walls of Hallett's cubicle were almost entirely covered.

But methodically, inexorably Hallett had proceeded with his task. When it was done he measured again, with a ruled tape, the cleared space along the wall. Then he compared it with the measurements of the piano, which he had jotted down in the company warerooms. The figures corresponded exactly.

Hallett's room had the perfect order of a watch-case. He knew exactly where everything was, every piece of music, every book, every phonograph

record. . . . He was the sort of man who never puts on a record without brushing it, before and after. It was his boast that he had never broken or lost a record. . . .

Ben Hallett glanced at the alarm-clock on his dresser. Four-thirty. He had a half hour yet in which to leave for the Harlem Chalet, where, for two years, he had played the piano nightly from six in the evening till two in the morning. But this was to be his last night at the Chalet. It was the night of his emancipation.

Cautious by temperament Hallett had been a long time in preparing for his severance from the Harlem Chalet orchestra. For a long time he had been giving piano lessons at the houses of private pupils in the daytime. He considered, now, that his clientele was sufficiently large to warrant the step he was taking.

On the morrow he was renewing his devotion to that art from whose services he had swerved when he joined the orchestra at the Chalet. For two years he had not seriously practiced the piano. For two years he had not been to the opera.

And Ben Hallett loved music discriminately and intensely. He loved the arts generally—painting, literature, sculpture,—but without that nicety of taste which characterized his love for music. He read a great deal, the more optimistic novelists and the more sensational magazines. The walls of his room testified to his passion for color: they were literally covered with Bakst-like cloths bought by the yard in the department stores, with lavishly chromatic pictures cut from magazines and



mounted. There were melting Riviera scenes, Maxfield Parrish potentates, Aubrey Beardsly pierrots, Dante, watching a magnificently voluptuous Beatrice, violet trees against star-dusted night skies, plazas flooded with silver moonlight.

So long as they satisfied his color sense Hallett was indifferent to the fact that some of these pictures were painted with a frankly ulterior motive: for example, that of the smoothly razored young man in dinner-clothes sitting with a lovely girl on a marble bench in an enchanted garden. The young man is smoking a cigarette and the girl is looking into his eyes. Because the garden was enchanting Hallett had forgiven the legend—"He is smoking a Fatima"—beneath the poster. Soberly, he had scissored the inscription away and tacked it next to another study in purple—a languorous maiden gazing over a flowered parapet at the Mediterranean. The walls of Hallett's room were a-swoon with lush, modulated color; not a square inch that was not covered with the bizarre-arabesqued cloth bought at Gimbel's or the pictures that had enticed his color-thirsty eyes. . . .

Hallett bent low, and, from under his cot, he pulled a neatly ordered pile of music marked "Classical." Here was nearly all the music he had played years before—in his conservatory days. Ben's musical preferences were sound, even distinguished. He knew and loved the three B's. He idolized Mozart. He reveled in the moderns, Strauss, Rimsky, Debussy.

Hallett fingered lovingly the tattered sheets: Chopin, Gluck, Brahms, and "The Well Tempered Clavichord" and "The Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue" of Bach. As his eye ran down the black-scarred pages of the Fugue his fingers began to play imaginary notes on the bedspread, and through his brain there rose the first slim spires of melody, delicately laced as the traceries of a Gothic arch. In execution Hallett rather fumbled his arpeggios but his ear heard them perfectly. . . . He turned a page. The sound solidified,

soared upward, terraced into infinite, blue heights and poised, firm and mighty, in a gleaming air. . . .

Ben put away the other music. The Fantasia and Fugue he put carefully on the chair. This was something you could dig your fingers into! Wait till his piano came next morning . . . !

## II

NO. 324 WEST 23RD STREET, where Ben lived, had formerly been a private house and his room was on what had formerly been the servants' floor. Only the three upper floors were given up to roomers; the first two were occupied by a department store fixture company. Through the glass doors of the first landing one beheld a curious spectacle: the white forms of female figures standing about in strange attitudes, some decapitated, some armless—like the Venus of Milo which Hallett numbered among his art collections—all with holes pierced neatly through their abdomens. Early mornings, when Ben returned from the Harlem Chalet, he was struck by this ghost-like, strangely human galaxy. He thought it rather indecent that these models should be left standing about this way, undraped and plainly visible.

When he got to the small corridor leading to the sidewalk Ben unlocked the rusty tin mail-box and found a post-card addressed to himself. Ben saw with delight that it summoned him to report the next evening at seven at the stage-door of the Metropolitan Opera House. . . . Not a bad way to spend one's first night of liberty.

Two days before Ben had presented himself to Mr. Judels, in charge of the supernumeraries at the Metropolitan, and asked to be enrolled once more. In the years preceding his membership in the Chalet orchestra, Ben had served frequently under Mr. Judels. In the costume of Roman legionary, Spanish peasant, monk, sailor, Russian serf he had heard almost the entire Metropolitan repertory.



Ben bought an evening paper and consulted the week's opera list. Tomorrow night they were doing "Aïda." It was four years since Ben had heard the Verdi opera, the four years he had been playing the piano at the Chalet. He supposed he would play again, as he had before, the rôle of an Egyptian soldier in the Triumphal March at the opening of the second act. It was not the most delightful of parts. The costumes were sometimes worn by veteran supers from Mill's Hotel and as a result were often malodorous. And there were other disadvantages: a tendency to shoo supers off-stage into the caverns below, whence no music is audible. But Ben did not think of these minor discomfitures: he thought only of the music, the glorious singing, the proximity of the opera stars. Once, even, Ben had attracted the notice of Caruso himself. The incident came back to him as he rode up-town in the L and he blushed as he thought of it.

Hallett had attracted the friendly notice of the stage-manager at the opera house by his facility in performing a certain coin trick. This feat involved the rapid and dextrous transfer of a dime from the tip of one finger to another while keeping the fingers quite rigid. Ben's execution of this trick was really extraordinary for its deftness. One night as Ben was standing in the wings watching Caruso, in the romantic costume of the unhappy Rudolph, talking to the stage-manager, he was startled to have the latter suddenly beckon to him. With trembling steps Hallett approached.

"This is Mr. Hallett," said the stage-manager. "He can do a great trick with a dime!"

Caruso's face lit up.

"Let's see!" he said and watched with the eagerness of a child as Ben put a coin on his index finger.

But Hallett's nervousness was so great that he had been unable to perform the trick. His fingers refused absolutely to obey his will. It was the great failure of his life. . . .

### III

THE Harlem Chalet is a gaudy, run-down dance-palace, a frayed imitation of the gorgeous salons down-town. Nor is the jazz quintette which entertains nightly its jaded and not too opulent patrons a virtuoso organization, playing for phonograph companies and Fifth Avenue dances. On this, his last night with the Chalet band, Ben played mechanically, thinking his own thoughts, islanded and absorbed in the midst of the strange noises generated by himself and his companions. He was unaware of the staccato gyrations of the habitués; he scarcely ever looked up from his music to the dance floor.

It was the longest evening he had ever spent in the Chalet. . . . Tomorrow began a new life. In the morning, his piano would arrive. Already Ben had canceled a twelve o'clock appointment with a pupil so that he could be at home when the piano arrived. At five he would be through with the day's lessons and there would be time for an hour on the Chromatic Fantasia before reporting for the opera. . . . As the violinist handed him the sheet music for "Yoo Hoo" Ben thought with pleasure of the return of Chaliapin. . . . He had supported him in "Boris" twelve years before. . . . He wondered whether Chaliapin was interested in coin tricks; perhaps there was still a chance to retrieve the historic fiasco. . . .

Till long past midnight Ben Hallett sat before the weary upright and thumped the familiar repertory of the Chalet orchestra. But it ended at last: his last service to the Chalet was to cooperate in producing the saccharine melody known as "April Showers." Then Ben said good-bye to his partners. These gentlemen wished him well, but accused him of being slightly "cuckoo." How could anyone forsake the Bohemianism of the Harlem Chalet for the dull routine of teaching!

As a matter of fact Hallett liked teaching. His pupils ranged in age from six to eighteen. Ben enjoyed guiding their faltering fingers; he didn't mind



listening to tedious exercises, was endlessly patient with wrong notes. Going from house to house was a sort of a diversion for him. He got along amazingly well with parents. For them he had an inexhaustible fund of funny stories, harmless in character. Ben kept what he called a "foolish book." In this book he pasted clippings of any incident or anecdote he came across which appealed to his sense of humor. Every day he clipped and every day he recounted. . . .

It was after two when Ben reached the rooming-house on 23rd Street. He let himself into the dark hallway and climbed the narrow stairs. Through the glass door of the fixture company he glanced at the truncated figures of the pink-and-white forms with his customary sense of faint shock which they always inspired in him. The long corridor of the second landing was filled with empty packing cases and it was so dark that Hallett stumbled against them.

Ben also stumbled against a lady. He apologized and walked up the third flight of stairs directly behind her. As he had never seen her before he concluded that she had just moved into the house. She wore a large hat and a black silk cape with Spanish fringe. She was rather more splendid, Hallett thought, than the ladies who ordinarily lived at 324.

She stopped in front of the corner room, the largest on the floor. Hallett's own room was one of the three directly above this.

The lady was unusually cordial. She inquired of Ben how long he had lived in the house, what he worked at. When he answered the latter question she told him she loved music, though she didn't care much for the classical. "It always sounds to me like somebody practicing," she confided.

She also confided her name, Daisy Schraider. Then, to Ben's amazement, she invited him to step in to see her sometime. He stammered his thanks and climbed up the final flight to his own room. It had been too dark to

discern Miss Schraider's features. Ben wondered what she really looked like. But he found himself considerably perplexed by her hospitality. . . .

There was a single electric bulb in Hallett's room which he had covered with a dark crimson cloth so that it emitted a dim, lurid glow. By the light of this crimson torch the pictures of the room took on singular colors: the Mediterranean took on a vermillion tinge, the young man, smoking a Fatima, looked purpurine, as though with high living, Dante lost his ascetic look and became sinister, malevolent, as though burning with unnatural desires.

Hallett loved to lie flat on his back on his cot and look at these pictures in this cavernous light. Best of all, though, he enjoyed listening to his favorite records in complete darkness. He did not usually play his records after midnight but tonight he felt such a sense of exhilaration that he could not go to sleep. He had, several days before, bought two records of Strauss's *Salomé*. He carefully took out these records, brushed them, fixed his graphophone with a "soft" needle, started the disc, put out the light, stretched out flat on the cot and listened. . . .

He had an extraordinary faculty for losing himself in the music, in an absorption almost trancelike. . . . The room became for him filled with vertiginous, swirling figures, dancing slowly at first, their white limbs shining through the darkness which clothed them. The hushes, half articulated rhythms, coiling slowly, like beautiful mottled snakes among the treading feet of the dancers, stinging them to a final frenzy of pain and ecstasy, wound themselves, too, into Hallett's brain . . . so tightly, that the end of the music left him limp, as at the ebbing of a drug. . . .

#### IV

BEN had arranged for the delivery of his piano at noon and, when he hurried back to his room shortly before



that time he found the men lifting the piano out of the truck. He eagerly ran upstairs ahead of them and opened the door of his room. Everything was in readiness. He waited. . . .

He heard the heavy tread of the men hoisting the instrument up the stairs a step at a time. At the foot of the final flight they stopped. He heard exclamations, oaths. A door opened . . . the oaths grew franker. Ben went down the stairs to see what was the matter. The piano-movers stood there panting.

"Lookit here, we can't get this box up them stairs!"

Ben stared at them. It was an unexpected contingency. The stairs to the top floor were considerably narrower and the piano, small as it was, could not be forced into the opening.

Ben Hallett would not accept the stubborn fact.

"I'll help you," he offered.

"Huh! We don't need no help. You couldn't get this up with nothin' shorta dynamite. Can't be done, that's all."

The door at the end of the hall opened. It was Daisy Schraider. She was attired in a soiled kimono, which she had wrapped loosely around her.

"What's all the shootin' for?" she inquired facetiously.

"Can't get this pianner up them stairs, that's what," explained one of the men.

"What shall we do?" asked Hallett helplessly.

"Do? Nothin' to do but take 'er back to the comp'ny," replied the piano-mover.

Hallett looked pitifully at Daisy Schraider.

"What do you know about that?" he kept saying. "What do you know about that? What shall I do?"

The piano-mover summarized the situation.

"I tell you, there's nothin' to do. The pianner's too large for the stairs. Or the stairs is too small for the pianner."

Then, with elaborate grunts the men began their retreat with the piano.

Daisy Schraider addressed Hallett.

"What'd they make you pay for the instrument?"

"Five a month."

"That all? Cheap!"

"It's a special rate for piano teachers," said Hallett miserably.

"I'll take it!" said Miss Schraider. "You can get it in my room easy."

"I'm sure that's very kind of you," said Ben; it'll save the men carrying it all the way down again."

"I don't play myself," she explained, "but I've a girl friend moving in with me next week that can make a piano talk!"

"All I ask is you sign for it," said one of the movers.

Daisy flung open her door. In a moment the piano had been moved from the hall into her room, and Hallett was left alone. Greatly depressed, he went back up-stairs to his room. The empty space along the wall which he had measured so carefully seemed to mock him. So did the Chromatic Fantasia, staring up at him from the bed. He looked at his watch. He had an hour before his next lesson. He ought to restore the dresser to its former place. But somehow he could not. He could not, so hastily, abandon his dream. . . .

His disappointment over the piano deadened somewhat Hallett's enjoyment of "Aida" that night. When he got back to his room he gathered, from the sounds that came from Miss Schraider's, below, that there was a "party" in progress there. For a moment Hallett thought he was back in the Harlem Chalet. . . . There was the sound of a couple dancing.

After a while, he started, for the second time that day, to put back the dresser in the space he had cleared for the piano. He could not do it. Something, he did not know what, prevented him. He sat down on the cot moodily.

What was the matter with him? He had done without a piano in his room for years. Why was he so lost without one now . . . ?

Suddenly an idea came to him—the idea that would solve his entire problem. Of course! He would get a Virgil clavier—a silent piano! He knew that he could get that up the narrow



stairs; it was no bigger than the organs that Salvation Army people use on street corners. He wondered he had not thought of it before! In some ways it was much better than a piano. He could play an hour in the day or night, without disturbing anyone. And the wrong notes wouldn't greatly matter. Just the thing to re-capture his forgotten technique. . . . And there would be none of the irritation attendant upon faulty execution.

Now he would not have to put back the dresser in the wall-space. . . .

The next day Ben Hallett installed the clavier. He had picked it up in a second-hand shop: it was made of a very fine dark wood, stained, by age, to a rich, lustreless color. On either side of the music rack he put two red candles in wooden holders. When he had lighted the candles Ben was as pleased if he had the stringed piano. He sat before the skeletonized instrument, made runs over the silent keys, tested the pedals. Then he placed the Chromatic Fantasia on the lectern of the clavier.

He began to play. . . . He felt a sense of exquisite freedom. He played with unaccustomed audacity, at a tempo which, in an audible instrument, would have been impossible for him. How clear the themes were! How fascinatingly they intertwined. What perfectly graded dynamics!

But all at once there burst in on him the raucous noise of Miss Schraider's piano downstairs and a male voice singing:

*"I'll be calling Yoo Hoo  
From a window far away. . . ."*

Hallett tried to put it out of his mind, to listen only to Bach, but here he found the limitation of his clavier. It gave him no help.

Daisy and her musical friends had full sway. . . .

He could not endure the unfair competition; with a deep sense of futility he arose from his clavier and went down into the street.

## V

For a week he was miserable. He considered, even, moving. He thought of complaining to the landlord. Daisy's friends played all evening and long beyond. And his own days were now filled with teaching appointments. Try as he might he could not, in the midst of the cacophony rising voluminously from below stairs, concentrate on Beethoven or Bach. Even his records were no longer a comfort to him. How could the elusive rhythms of "Salomé" survive the robust onslaught of the current jazz!

A Nemesis seemed to have fastened on him. What should he do? He felt himself giving up in despair. He must leave his room, move. . . . A mild person ordinarily, he was becoming morose, ugly, ill-tempered.

Then easily as a miracle, the solution came to him. It was during the crisis of what had become the customary struggle. He had been playing Bach. Daisy's friends had been playing Berlin. Like a drowning man overcome by a tide, Hallett had felt himself losing in his fight to keep his mind on his composer. If only *his* piano made a sound!

He felt himself giving up in despair. He, the mild Hallett, felt like shouting terrible oaths at the miscreants below stairs. . . .

But he had a thought!

He got up and left the room without stopping, even, to put out the light. In a few minutes he returned, with a small, blue package.

Again he sat down in front of Bach. He opened the package and took out a wad of absorbent cotton. Carefully he stuffed his ears with small bits of the fleece-like stuff. Downstairs, in Miss Schraider's, someone was singing "April Showers":

*"It isn't raining rain, you know  
It's raining vi-o-lets. . . ."*

But on the face of Ben Hallett there was peace. Around him rose, unmolested, a noble harmony, a mighty architectonic of sound, that poised firm and mighty, in a gleaming air. . . .



# La Femme Terrible

By Charles G. Shaw

## I

THE matter of intelligence in woman is analogous to the matter of fraud by the "bank" at roulette. Both are wholly unnecessary to cabbage the bonanza in question.

## II

COLD, shriveled, emaciated women affect me in much the same manner as cold, shriveled, emaciated cigar butts.

## III

SHOW me a truthful woman and I will show you a liar.

## IV

CAN there be any doubt that love begets suspicion? When man is in love he is invariably suspicious of the object of his amours. When woman is in love she is invariably suspicious of everyone.

## V

VANITY is perhaps the leading influence in the career of woman—*i. e.* vanity in man.

## VI

IN the conquest of woman darkness is a factor of no little import. It represents the triumph of fancy over fact.

## VII

It has been said that woman never knows when a romance ends. This is

not so. She merely refuses to admit that it has ended.

## VIII

JUST as the weakness, the helplessness, the timidity of woman appeals to man, so is he repelled by her strength, her efficiency, her boldness. The arrant rubbish preached about "woman's place in the world," "woman's right to govern," etc., etc., must disgust to the point of nausea the truly feminine woman. It is only the woman who is a failure among men who may ever succeed among women.

## IX

You may tell a woman she is heartless. You may tell her she is a deceiver. You may tell her she is a fool, a liar, a beast, a fiend. . . . But never tell her that she is a bore.

## X

WHEN a woman is popular with other women you may at once rest assured that she is not the one you will sneak out into the garden while the orchestra is strumming a strain from Strauss and, tossing your Corona Perfecto into the begonias, swear by all the coupons you may ever hope to cut, that so far as you are concerned, she is the only eclair in the bakery.

## XI

WOMEN understand the art of conversation far better than men do. Thus, they are far better listeners.



## XII

A THING of beauty is a damned nuisance.

## XIII

SURELY flowers are the ideal present to send a woman. They wither and fade before the romance has ended and leave no mocking memory as aftermath. Sweet scented, fragile, ephemeral, they epitomize all the delights of a *grande passion*. How can one compare to these bibelots of nature such maudlin mementos as, let us say, a photograph of a once adored face that has since lost all charm for one—an absurd cartoon that is hidden on the top shelf of the wardrobe back of last year's straw hat?

## XIV

A MAN likes to believe he has suffered. A woman likes to believe she has been able to make a man suffer.

## XV

IT is the sympathetic woman who is invariably the successful one with men over any lengthy period of time. Beauty, wit, gaiety, glamor, all fade, while a woman of mere intellectual prowess becomes a bore. When man is wretched he seeks sympathy. When man is wretched he is most vulnerable to woman.

## XVI

WHEN a man ceases to make an effort to attract a woman he is either weary of her or sure of her. Or perhaps he may be both.

## XVII

IN an *affair du cœur* the man begins by deceiving the woman and ends by deceiving himself. His innumerable "I love you's" and "cannot live without you's," etc., etc., eventually so impress themselves upon his mind that one rainy morning he pushes his scrambled eggs aside and, gazing inanely into the coffee, realizes that he himself is actually in love.

## XVIII

IT is not the man who understands women that may boast of many conquests. It is the fellow who interests them, who fascinates them, who puzzles them. But never for a second does he attempt to analyze them.

## XIX

WOMEN like men for their strength; women love men for their sympathy; women hate men for their sentimentality.

## XX

THE most successful of lovers is the man who knows when not to make love. Nothing ruins a romance so much as love making—that is, love making at the wrong time. The secret of the conquest of woman is the realization of the proper moment to strike. Thus, the experienced fellow will invariably scent this moment. It is then he omits no shaft of subtlety; it is then he employs every artifice of amour.

## XXI

WOMEN make romance to remember, men to forget.





# Also Twin Beds

*By Miriam Teichner*

## I

**T**WO women lay, straight and slim and silent, in twin beds.

Neither woman slept, but each lay very still and breathed quietly and deeply because she wanted the other to think that she slept.

They were mother and daughter, and they loved each other because they were mother and daughter, but what lay buried in the heart of each, the other did not know, and each walked, day by day, alone, surrounded by an invisible wall of loneliness and of suffering.

The mother was still young—less than fifty—and her white hair clustered about her face in pleasant little curls; her brown eyes were bright and her soft cheeks, with the merest suspicion of a sag, were smooth and pink. She was a widow of less than a year, and her heart was a clotted bruise of pain.

She and her husband had been lovers, always. They had met when she was seventeen, and had married a few weeks later.

He had never been a worldly success. He was a man not much liked—sombre and distant and disapproving to people who held no interest nor charm for him. And as the years went on, all the interest and charm and beauty in his world had centered in his slender, childlike wife.

Children had meant little to him, and his had feared him, the fear unlightened by love. Instinctively, they sensed what he did not know—that he resented and disliked them; they were, to him, the inevitable price he paid for having the woman he loved, because she could be

had at no other price than marriage and maternity.

So, his friends were few, and his children's hearts were turned against him, but his wife loved him with a great and splendid passion. His life of failures never dimmed her love. He was an impeded artist, an enchanted genius, a creator without the power to create. Beauty was a consecration to him, and ugliness a blasphemy. A blemish on the face of one of his children made him ill and irritable with disgust. He hurt the child with his impatient scorn. The imperfection was a personal affront to him—an insult to the god of beauty that he had enshrined in his cold and lonely heart. His wife was the symbol of that god, and he loved her alone.

When he sat at his piano and played snatches of music for her, he would say: "This is to be a symphony in which our love will endure for eternity"; but the symphony was never written, and no one ever heard the hymns of praise which his soul sang to his love. He was too great for mediocrity, too mediocre for greatness. He pulsed to every beauty, and cringed at everything sordid and ugly, but he became, after a time, a traveling salesman of a pencil which had a perpetual point.

He was not a successful salesman, because he scorned the men with whom his work threw him, and was too proud and too honest to hide that scorn. He took that job—he always, with icy irony, called it that—as he had taken others—because a friend offered it to him, and because his family needed money. He hated family life, and chafed against it, but a sort of heroic



cowardice—fear of convention, and of losing his wife—made him stick to the responsibility which he had taken upon himself, when the burden was most irksome and terrible.

He never quite settled, however, into commonplaceness. He persisted, somehow, in both his meagre little affairs of business, and in his passion for beauty, and at last he died, alone, and in the threadbare little room of a third-class hotel. On the gritty table of the room, between an ink-spattered Gideon Bible and a tattered telephone directory, they had found the picture of his wife, young and starry-eyed and beautiful.

And now his widow lay in her bed, and thought of her dead husband. Her heart cried out to him, and every day and every hour, when she saw beauty, she called to him to come and share it. Without him, all beauty was only a great ache. Pictures and music and rivers and the moon on snow-sprinkled hills; branches that latticed like lace against winter-blue skies; the grace of a kitten at play, and the voice of an actor that throbbed, or a cello that told mellow tales—she loved them all because he had loved them, and she hated them because they persisted in a world where he could not share them.

Sometimes, now, her thoughts turned ghoulishly on his dead body—dead almost a year, and then, silently she shuddered.

That was a swift paroxysm of pain, too terrible to endure. Now she lay quite calm, but her thoughts were bitter.

"My life is over," she thought, "and I was not through with life. Oh—I was not through."

And she relived the first years of her marriage and her joy in love. She lived the trips and the little, hard-earned vacations they had had together, and his pain, sometimes, as he sighed out his discouragement and weariness with his graying head on her breast. She thought of his never-failing worship, and she lived with him, as best she could, that last night alone in his ugly little hotel room. She could never know

whether he had realized that he was dying, whether he suffered, and stretched out his arms, and called to her in the dark loneliness of death. That was almost as horrible as the thought of his dear body, after he had been dead a year.

Half resentfully, her thoughts turned to her daughter, lying, slim and still, at her side.

"She has all of life to live," she told herself. "She is young, and rather better than pretty. Men look at her, and look away, and look again. She has personality and charm. She could be married tomorrow if she liked. And the little goose won't look at any of them. If she only knew what joy it is to love and be loved! But she doesn't know. She doesn't care. She is selfish and vain and too ambitious. She wants to be a sculptress, and nothing else matters. I don't matter. She dragged me over here to Italy just because she doesn't want to live alone, but she doesn't love me—not really. She never loved her father, though she has her brilliance and her talent from him. She never understood him, and she does not understand me. She thinks I can be quite gay and happy, as though nothing had happened, and travel about endlessly, seeing sights. I can't; I hate sights; I hate the moon out there, and the hills. I hate the galleries and the concerts. I don't want to do anything, nor see anything. I just want my husband. Oh, my dear, my dear . . ."

Almost, she sat erect and held out her arms to the something of him which might, somehow, still live; but she was afraid of disturbing that peaceful figure in the other little white bed, and she lay quite still, breathing deeply.

## II

HER daughter lay and listened to the tiny thud of tears on her pillow, as, unrestrained, they oozed from under her closed lids, and rolled down. She did not raise her hand to wipe them, because her mother thought that she was asleep. She lay very still and



thought of the man she loved and could not marry.

She was an artist, as her father had been, but her art was not impeded. She created with passion, and with a flame-like joy that was sometimes close to genius. She had her father's love of beauty, but to her beauty existed only that she might understand and reproduce it; it was not actual beauty until it had passed through the crucible of her soul, and, by the necromancy of her vision and her ecstasy, had been given to the world again, as something new and strange. Some critics complained petulantly that this work of hers was not beautiful—these strange, angular statuettes that were attenuated and seemed to suffer; these queer, unmusical verses, which, once you gave them of your patience, had a strange fey music, a weird, gaunt grace of their own.

She could not concentrate, and she did too many things amazingly well, but she created because she could not help creating. It was as if that daunted, thwarted thing that was the soul of her father fastened itself upon her and said:

"Now I am to be appeased; you, somehow, are free. You are to do my work. I will give the world new beauty—through you."

And so she wrote her misty little verses, and made her twisted, haunting little statuettes, and she sang, and sometimes, even, when that fire of artist energy in her flared too red and high, she danced, with smoky scarves or shimmering fabrics twined about her slim little body, and a crooked smile on her face which, of a sudden, would be gnome-like, or gamin.

She was loved by many men, but with the perverseness that seemed a part of her life and her genius, she had no choice but to love the one man of her acquaintance who tossed her nothing but careless friendship. Just as she made meagre, wistful little statuettes, and wrote meagre, wistful little verses, she lived a meagre and wistful life, once she had found her love.

The only fulness that she knew, after that, was the fulness of suffering. Her agony of desire for the man who gave her nothing was so full, so complete, so overwhelming that, almost, it was a life in itself. He had become engaged to another woman while their friendship was still going its casual way, and, soon after, she had taken her mother abroad. She had money enough. Her whimsical statuettes were widely exhibited, and they found many buyers. She might have stayed on in her studio in the Sixties in New York; might have gone on with the old life of flirting and dancing and moody working—a life which her friends envied her. She could not stay, though. She longed for new sights, new sounds, new beauties; the very thought of her studio, her friends, with their glittering patter of repartee, afflicted her with a kind of mental nausea. Suffering matured her suddenly. She could never play at being a woman of the world again, because now she was a woman of the world—a woman with pain in her heart.

She lay and thought of the man she loved, and how it would have been to be his wife. She thought of his straight, lean strength and his blond, straight hair, and the depth in his voice when it was tender—even so little tender as it was when he spoke to her. She thought of him as the husband of the other girl, and wondered why men love. She was handsomer than that other girl, more gifted, cleverer; but, she told herself, the other girl had, after all, been cleverer, for she had won his love. It was terrible to think of them as husband and wife—especially terrible on white moonlit nights.

A dance was going on, downstairs in the hotel. The music was almost too far away to be heard, but sometimes the air quivered and pulsed with the high vibration of a violin.

Moonlight, and music and loneliness! One ought not to have to suffer that way when one was young. It was such a waste—such a wicked throwing away of youth and beauty and the power to



live and to love. Pretty soon, she wouldn't be young any more. Pretty soon moonlight wouldn't be any more to her than just a help in getting over dark country streets.

She began to count on her fingers how many full moons there would be in her life while she was still young and the moon still meant a splendor of romance to her. They seemed, compared to the moons which, she was sure, would be no more to her than arc-lights in the sky, pitifully few. Surely, by the time one was thirty, one did not care for love, nor for the moon. She would grow old, and no one would care. He—the one man—would be absorbed in his wife. They would be happy in their mutual life, full of love and friends and work and out-of-door play, and laughter. It was cruel to have thoughts like that on a white moonlit night. It was hard to be alone. She had never realized until this happened, how alone one could be in the companionship of one's mother—one's mother, whom one loved.

And, with envy, she thought of her mother, that silent figure which breathed so peacefully at her side.

"She has had her life," she thought, "and it was a glorious life. She was adored; I don't think that Helen of Troy could have been more worshipped than she was. She had her husband and her babies, and she could give and give and take and take and find there was always more to give and more to take. That's the wonderful thing about love; it's the only relation in life in which, at the same time, you can be both greedy and generous. She was both. She demanded a lot from father, but she gave a lot, too, and they loved each other almost too much. That is what makes her so strange and indifferent now. She had never had anything in her life but love. She didn't do things

nor make things; she only loved. So she hasn't any right to be dissatisfied. She filled her life with the thing that seemed most worth while to her, and she had that to the full. She had it almost all of her life. Why—she's an old woman now—almost fifty. I'd be content if I had a year of what she has had—a month—a week even. Just to have had it—that's the thing. It will be hideous to grow old, and have no memories of love."

Again, the violin filled the air with a poignance, more felt than heard, of quivering sound; outside, in the corridor, there came the voices of men and women, going together to their rooms. She listened to their laughter and the sound of a key in a lock. The tears oozed from under her lashes, and dripped into her bright, short hair, or fell, with tiny thuds, on the pillow.

### III

IN the morning, they bathed, and slipped into breakfast gowns, and rang for coffee.

"Sleep well, dear?" asked the mother serenely.

"Yes, dear, wonderfully," came the even reply. "Did you?"

"Never better," answered the mother. "These rolls are the best we've had, though I shall never stop wanting my hot toast in the morning."

Later they dressed and went out. They had a plan of museums to see before lunch, and a concert in the afternoon.

\* \* \*

"They have left home their fur mantles, and put on their beautiful cloth costumes today, because it is warm; they are very rich and happy," meditated the chambermaid, as she shook up a pillow on which the tears had dried.





# Birthmark

*By Harry Kraus*

## I

FROM some place in Connecticut, where the circus had been barned for the winter, Riley sent me a card. They were coming down for the season, and they wanted me for the rajah stunt with the elephants. I relayed in two weeks ahead of schedule. That much time I had to wait before we opened in the Garden, and most of it I loitered away in a cigar store in Twenty-sixth Street. You know the sort of place: a good sized floor space to accommodate the crowds besieging the ticket speculators on fight nights; in the rear, the cigar factory, wire-screen partitioned; a back room attachment where a timid poker game clicked its chips afternoons and evenings; and Eddie. But you don't know Eddie.

He worked as a tobacco stripper in the cigar factory. On my meanderings between the front of the shop and the back-room poker game I saw him only as a glum, silent man of indeterminate age—his globular head bristled with a sparse, grayish growth—bent intently on his work.

It is likely I should have paid him no more attention than did the other habitués of the place had he not forced his friendship upon me. He had no selfish purpose in mind. Plainly fond of me, he extended the hospitality of his home.

Friendship from an unexpected source, unalloyed, unsolicited, moves me strangely: a rare glow of gratitude; wonder that I should be singled out for favor; doubt of my usual well-grounded belief in human selfishness; a probe into the actuating motive of my

benefactor. All this mixed with resentment and irritation for permitting response by my case-hardened sensibilities.

In this way was I affected when Eddie offered me bed and breakfast.

We, the drifters, solitary, detached, vagrom, although trafficking in superinduced sympathies, are a cynical breed, melancholiacs. We have learned well that the world is cruel and miserly. We live by the terse dicta that the best we can get is the worse, and—in trenchant corollary—that no one gives anything away but ice in the winter. Calculated friendship does not warm us. We are not grateful for dutiful giving, for ostentatious altruism, for aid invested against the chance of future returns. We accept, of course, and with ready thanks, the mendicant in us laughing derisively, the exploiter sneering in contempt.

But once in every while comes a show of friendship so palpably genuine that it hurts. For the smother of deep gratitude, the choke of mute thanks does hurt, you know. The realization that someone cares. And we are ashamed of our emotional riot.

And Eddie cared. I do not give much credence to his reason for having been drawn to me. Mere pretext. My condition aroused his sympathy, and for anyone so placed he would have done as much.

Only once did I hear anyone in the store make serious mention of Eddie. That was when Whitey, a craps sharpshooter, in moral thesis of sobering effect, referred to him as an object lesson.

Someone had been complaining of a



long unvaried run of bad luck. Around this place, I can tell you, there is a deal of talk about thousands of dollars that have been wagered and lost. But these tales of misfortune are rendered boastingly. In an argument between gamblers, men who are admittedly out to win, the clinching conclusion is: "G'on, I lost more money in one night than you lost in a year." The particular fellow who had irked Whitey was not boastful of his losses. He was very bitter in his denunciation of "some dog that fell asleep on the back stretch of the Havana track."

"Whadya cryin' about?" demanded Whitey. "Quit singin' 'em, will ya? Luck! We're all lucky. There's a guy back there can't even tell time."

For Eddie had no comprehension of quantities. To him a number, an hour, an amount had no relativity, no quantitative value, only the significance of a symbol.

In the beginning when they displayed his imbecility for my pleasure I was as much impressed as any of my coterie of touts and gamblers might have been. I looked on; I was amused; I murmured an appropriate, pitying "'S tough." I had long since become callous to human oddities and anomalies. Idiocy I found too prevalent to be remarkable. And cataloguing him as a freak, I dismissed Eddie for other interests.

But gradually, as I noted that he had marked me for his esteem and affection, Eddie and the aberrations of his warped brain seeped into my attention, stamped themselves indelibly. It annoyed me to find him twining my thoughts.

His antics began to fascinate. Each day I saw him perform the ritual. For the men in the shop at the cigar benches, the proprietor himself, never tired of heckling Eddie with the same program of banter. They paraded his puerility before every newcomer; his rejoinders to their prodding were unvarying reiterated. But they could not tease him into anger. He answered petulantly, shaking his head in gentle protest.

"You got to work till four o'clock today, Eddie."

"No, I won't," Eddie grumbled. "You can't work me like a dog. I quit at six." He seemed oblivious of the chorus of laughter.

"You're a good man, Eddie. You ain't getting enough money for your work. This week we raise you to sixteen dollars."

"No, I ain't gonna work for them wages. I want my fourteen dollars. I don't work cheap."

At these times lunacy was scribed on his face. His head came up slowly with a swivel motion; his jaw sagged like a dead load, and, dragging with it the loose, wet, pendulous lip, bared a scallop of ochre teeth. His damp, bleary eyes were as gentle as those of a sick lamb. His talk dribbled, the guttural voice pitched in grievance.

He indulged in spasmodic, unpreluded carnivals of laughter, laughter that sounded like hard coal sliding down a chute. This merriment he never explained. Spying a group of three or four whispering with heads together, then disintegrating with a laugh, he would slap his thigh and rock in great glee. "Ho, ho, ho! That was a hot one!"

I could go on with instances, but all were variations of the same ludicrous incapacity. The prank of changing a note of ten dollar denomination, counting out for him nine single dollars or eleven instead of ten, Eddie making a great show of recounting the money and pocketing the nine or eleven dollars; then returning them unquestioningly when told an error had been made. That time he walked home because he lacked a nickel. He had money, a handful of silver, but not the required coin. And Eddie knew only that he must have a nickel to be admitted through the subway gate.

These inanities began to pall after a week, and my interest in Eddie reverted to a measure of his regard for me. His solicitude, his deferential devoirs, were actually embarrassing. He inquired after me anxiously when I was not in the shop. He alluded to me as "that nice young feller." When I came in, a



ceremony of effusive salutation. He took my hand and fondled it avidly. He had a chair for me beside his. He tendered me a cigar. Asked of my affairs, careful to put his remarks into the argot of the sporting fraternity.

It was inevitable that I should come in for much comment because of my close association with Eddie.

"What's the idea hangin' around the poor nut all the time? What's the racket?"

They drew a quite logical inference. In a jesting way, to be sure. They had Eddie labeled as "queer," and badgered me with ribald pleasantries. I laughed it off; but several times I caught a twang of sincerity edging the raillery, a look askance; and I began to wonder.

## II

I DECIDED to stay away from the place, but I could not. The memory of the glad smile washing over his face as he greeted me, the pleasure he derived from having me near—this tied me to him. He seemed so starved for companionable contact; he hungered for me. And it was really so little that I did. Only to sit by him and talk for half an hour. And how much this meant to him. I confess the dribble was nauseating, the feel of his hand repellent, but this I could endure. I balked only when it came to sharing his afternoon coffee. Each day he invited, each day I declined; and his disappointment hurt me.

"It's good," he assured, "coffee and schneken." He soaked the cake; brown drops rolled from his fingers, dripped from his chin, back into the tin pail. I could not. I was afraid that some day soon I might.

I put myself through a futile inquiry. But I could not reconcile my conflicting emotions: self-reproach for possessing an attribute I had always despised—sympathy; wonder that anyone could care for me in such degree; relish of the flattering, untried sensation of being cared for; fascinated dread—with the sensitiveness of my

kind to superstition and fetish—of an occult influence.

Our growing friendship began to breed confidences. I was held by the paradox of the rational man glinting through his cracking reticence. He could put intelligent questions; he had a droll, applicable wit. He asked once, when they kept him late in the shop: "Do you want me to bring my bed here?"

When his great cushion of back was humped assiduously to his work, his soggy body pouring over the chair, his brown-stained fingers dextrously stemming the tobacco leaves and smoothing the halves caressingly over his knees, his jaw clamped shut, his dangling lip derricked so that it protruded in a moist fringe, his sick eyes lidded, Eddie appeared ordinarily normal.

The work was mechanical—a smooth twist of the wrist and a pluck of the fingers that required no ideational process, a monotonous labor ideal for an addled mind, yet with an associated knowledge that Eddie had assimilated.

He knew tobacco: grades, textures, colors, prices, varieties; the minutiae of manufacture; to the pound the amount of stock carried. He was summoned as consultant when a salesman called—true, in comic flattery, but behind the levity there was deference to his opinion.

Through my talks with him there filtered shy, obscure indices to his tantalizing past. Such personal divagations, swamped under a spume of aimless, maundered drivel, I salvaged and pleaded into coherence. The cumulation, while distressingly stingy in solid fact, held intelligence sufficient to goad me into curiosity for the tragic circumstance that had distorted his life. For this much I knew: that Eddie had at one time been a normal being. On this basic fact I threaded his other divulgences: that he had had his own shop; that he had been married; that he now lived with a daughter; that he played the violin.

It is axiomatic that the insane do not



consider themselves so. Startling and disturbing, therefore, was Eddie's pathetic confession of his insanity. He gave it inadvertently, in a musing way, spraying me with his wet smile.

"Once I was all right. I'm not so all right now." Very delicately put, of course.

But I could not pry from him the actual occurrence that had brought on his infirmity. As to the transitional phase in his life he was very vague. At times I thought deliberately so; this when a furtive gleam or a sly, roguish twinkle blotted his eyes dry for a moment. Again, he seemed to be striving for remembrance, and as it eluded him he answered apologetically: "I dunno. I guess I was sick for a long time. I didn't know nothin'. I was like crazy."

But Eddie did not bring me luck. Through the week the poker game had tapped my bank roll. It was at two o'clock one morning when the winners "packed in," the game dissolved, and I cashed four white chips. Twenty cents to my name and the circus not due for three days. The gamekeeper granted me permission to sleep in the backroom. He locked me in. I ruminated over a cigarette on the caprice of fortune. Then, hunched over the green-baized table, my head pillowed in my arms, I slept.

Morning. Eddie, shaking me awake gently, was appalled.

"You slept here all night?"

"Sure. They sent me to the cleaners last night. I'm broke."

He clucked pitying. "You ain't got no place to sleep?"

"Oh, I'll find some place by tonight. I got a whole day ahead of me. Gee, it seems a long time. I've never been up so early before."

"You come home with me tonight, yes?" he beseeched. His grieving for me was so evident. "My girl'll make good eats for us tomorrow."

"Sure I'll go, Eddie. Thanks. Well, I'll mooch along now and coffee up. See you later." He radiated pleasure.

### III

THAT evening he guided me to his home in the lower East Side. On Mulberry Street we stopped at a pushcart for oysters. Eddie rummaged in his pocket and brought out a wrinkled lemon and fifteen cents. The oyster man took the money, halved the lemon and, cracking the shells, gave Eddie his oysters, one as soon as he had eaten the other. Five in all he had; and when he had finished, smacking his lips, chewing a shred of lemon rind, he bade me have mine.

"No, I don't care for 'em. Say, Eddie, why didn't you have six of 'em? They're six for fifteen."

"Sure I had six. I always have six every night. Six for fifteen."

The Italian oyster man eyed me malignantly as we moved on.

Eddie brought me to a hive of tenement flats. I felt my way behind him up long, dark, odorous flights of stairs. A door pushed open, and I was in the kitchen of Eddie's home.

A dingy, putrid place. A yellow fan of gas light. A tall, slender girl busy over a gasping huddle of pots on the stove. His daughter, I presumed. Exotic, the sleazy thing she wore, many colored, many spangled. She did not look up as we entered. There was no greeting. Eddie had received his wages that day, and now without a word he gave her the greasy bundle of money. She shuffled it in swift count and tucked it away in a fold of her clothes, looked at me quickly, then turned. I saw she was beautiful, but before I could assay her beauty I was horrified by the three long, livid scars that creased the middle of her smooth forehead.

Eddie sat me in state in the squalid parlor, turned on a whistling, festive jet of light. We smoked and talked idly until a clatter of dishes summoned us to table. Eddie sat at one end, I at the other, she between. The uncovered board was spread with heaped, steaming platters. Eddie sniffed appreciatively. "Good eats, huh?"



They *were* good, and I was hungry; but I longed desperately to get away from the table out of sight of Eddie's daughter. She did not eat. Either she had eaten before we came, or she had given me her share. She sat silent and rigid, her eyes unwavering, her body held stiff and straight, her hands clasped in her lap. Absolutely motionless. I watched her surreptitiously over my food. Her sullen, inanimate beauty awed me. The hideous blemish between her brows did not mar the perfection of her features. It was negligible, as irrelevant as a decorative tribal mark. She was more than a compelling image graven of stone, more than mummified in some magic embalm she secreted. She was ossified, living. Her inflexibility scared me. I could not detect the slightest quiver of nostril or twitch of eyelid. Of all of her, only the amber hair had movement, shimmering, vibrating in the gaslight.

And her silence—puzzling at first, numbly bewildering, then terrorizing! I was in an agony of expectancy, my nerves frayed. She must make some sound soon. Anything. Cough. Sigh. But no sound came.

"For God's sake, say something!" I begged inaudibly.

Silence. Only Eddie gibbering over his food. A wave of frenzied fear surged over me. What kind of a hop joint was this, anyway? I pushed my plate from me and fumbled for a cigarette. My action seemed to relieve her. She melted blandly into motion. Without a word she cleared the table, washed the dishes at a black, scaly sink. I watched her, enchanted. Eddie dragged his chair near mine.

"She's deaf and dumb."

I could have laughed aloud in my hysteria of relief. Silly, maudlin exaggerater of trifles! Of course. She was deaf and dumb. Obvious enough, now that I had Eddie's succinct explanation of her silence. Why had I not thought of that before?

I relaxed, slumped comfortably in my chair, lighted one of Eddie's cigars, chuckled indulgently at my scare of a

few minutes since. Can you imagine? Me all ready to keel over because of a pretty deaf mute with a groove in her dome. And all doped out that I was in some kind of a house of mystery.

Her work finished, she pushed a chair into the corner opposite me. Sitting there, she seemed not as starkly rigid as before. She blended with the gloom, wrapped around her draperies of blue shadow. Nebulous she seemed, distant. Her eyes lost their empty fixity. Lament, placid in a nimbus of tawny hair. The three scars, mercifully blurred, might be furrows of deep thought now, incongruent.

The ridiculous feeling grew on me that she could hear. Perhaps Eddie created this illusion by leaning very close to me, his voice a rasping whisper.

"She's a good girl," he croaked.

"She takes care of me fine."

"Yeh? How did she get the marks on her forehead?"

"Them? Oh, that's a birthmark."

"Birthmark?"

"Sure. Her mother seen a fire a few months before the girl was born, and it frightened her. Then when the girl was born she had them marks."

"It's a funny kind of a mark."

A queer smile sluiced over his face. I did not think him capable of that sort of expression, craft, guile.

"Yeh, it's funny, ain't it? Like a fork."

How vivid the figure, ghastly in caricature: the three scars, the tines; the haft, the thin, straight ridge of the nose.

"Maybe when her mother was frightened that's what made her deaf and dumb?" I offered.

"Yeh. That's the way I figured it out."

Quiet for a space while we puffed meditative smoke. He swayed still closer, patting my hand. The wavering gaslight overhead cast his face in fantastic relief—the pitch of forehead, the broad plane of predatory nose, the contour of blanched ear and furzed jawbone. His eyes and mouth were vagued in sinister shadow, and without its habitual vapid smile of the shallow,



humid eyes, the drooling, gelatin lips, the face of Eddie was an evil, grisly face.

"You like me, don't you, Eddie?"

"Sure I like you. You're such a nice young feller."

"Do you like every nice young feller that you see?"

"No. Not every one." He speculated. "Only nice young fellers when they're like you."

"Whadya mean 'when they're like me'?"

He lifted a tentative forefinger. It pointed to my cheek.

"This," he whispered.

"This?" I puzzled. "What?"

The finger reached closer, flickered lightly on my face, then dropped.

"Birthmark."

"Birthmark? Oh, this." I caressed the little purple patch on my cheek. "I don't know what it is. Maybe it is a birthmark. Never bothers me. Don't even know it's there unless I'm shaving."

"Maybe your mother seen a fire, too."

"Maybe. So if a feller's got a birthmark you like him, eh, Eddie?"

"Yeh."

"Why?"

"I dunno."

"Because your girl's got a birthmark?"

"No. Not for that. I don't like girls with birthmarks, only fellers."

#### IV

HE sucked on his cigar.

"I had a boy once. He got burned up in a fire. He'd be just like you if he was living now."

"How'd he get burned?"

"He was playing with some matches and his clothes caught on fire. He was a little boy. He was six years old. He was by my first wife. And she died. So I got married again. The girl here is from my other wife. He was playing with some matches in the kitchen, and when he was all on fire and burnin' up he screamed for my wife. But what did she care? She wasn't his mother.

She was in the front room and he ran to her. 'I am burning! I am burning!' he hollered. But she said, 'Stay out o' here! Don't come in here!' And she locked the door. And he was all by himself, a little baby, my little boy, and he was burning up! His clothes and his hair and everything was burnin'. And she was tellin' him what to do. She wouldn't go out and put out the fire. No. Not her. She was hollerin' through the door, tellin' him what to do. 'Spill some water on you!' she was hollerin'. 'Roll around on the floor!' And he was burnin' up all the time. Some people heard him screamin' and they put out the fire and took him to the hospital, but it was too late. He was burned up to nothin'. That was what he told me when I went to see him in the hospital. He could talk a little, but he was dead already. I could hardly hear him. He was as good as dead. He was all black like coal. And he was cut open all over like with a knife. He was burned up black. It seemed like fire was coming out of him. His lips and his tongue was black and cracked open, and black blood was coming out. Everything was black. Only his eyes. They were red. And he was crying to me. 'Papa, give me water. I'm burning inside. My belly is burning like a stove.' And then he died."

Eddie was sprawled over the table, arms flung out. Great sobs wrenched him. Tears flecked his face. The cigar between his fingers was crushed through.

"And then I came home and told my wife what my boy told me. I said: 'You didn't go to him and put out the fire. You let him burn up and die.' And she said: 'I was afraid to go. I was afraid to look on the fire because then when my baby would be born he would have a birthmark.' She was afraid that her baby would have a birthmark. Do you hear that! So she lets my boy get burned up. She didn't know for sure if the baby would have a birthmark. It don't happen every time, does it? And then when the baby was born it was a girl, and she was a pretty baby.



And I looked all over on her and she didn't have a birthmark. Yeh, she was all right, but my little boy was dead."

I was bewildered. He was saying that the girl was born unblemished, and yet . . . a few minutes before . . . when I had asked him about the scars. . . . I should not have said anything, but I could not restrain myself. The horrible portrayal of the boy's death, the silly superstition which had caused it, and the loathsome spectacle of Eddie himself, moaning, slobbering, dithering, his head propped upon his hands now. The girl in her corner, quiet, mellow eyed. . . . I was sickened . . . curdled.

"Sure she was born without a birthmark?" I blurted. "Her mother didn't see. . . ."

"Who said that?" he thrust his head at me venomously. "Who said she didn't have a birthmark? Are you blind? Can't you see it? Can't you see those marks on her head?"

He was raving, furious. I tried to placate him.

"Sure I see it. I didn't understand you, Eddie, that's all. Sure I see it."

I took his hand, smoothing it.

"It's tough, all right, Eddie. Poor kid!"

He calmed after a bit; whimpered a

little. Fresh cigars. I had no right to take up the story again. But it disturbed me; there was a cramp in it some place that bothered.

"The girl must have been born deaf and dumb, too. That was a special kind of a mark."

"No. She wasn't deaf and dumb when she was born." He spoke wearily, in abstraction of manner. "She cried all right, and she could hear, too, I think. Because if something made a loud noise her eyes would jump up quick like this." He jerked his brows upward, the whites of his eyes glimmered for an instant.

"After she stopped crying. After I—"

He seemed to catch himself quickly in something he should not have said. His lower lip came up and buttoned over the other. He peered at me warily.

"After what?" I prompted. I tried to appear not too interested, gaped.

His hand was sliding into the table drawer. It came out with a black, gun-metal fork. Malevolent, the gleam in his eyes.

"It must have been pretty good and hot. She screamed once. It frightened me. Like a cat when you step on it in a dark room. And after she never cried no more."



A MAN measures his first kiss by the sensation. He measures the others by the taste.



WOMAN'S attitude toward man is a threefold one: captivate, capture and cage.



REFUTATION—the process of meeting calumny with slander.



# A Note on Thrill

By John Norcross

THRILL has ever played a dominant rôle in my life. I have been thrilled by moonlight, Russian kümmel, Schumann, stock-company melodrama, Venice at dawn, the face of a shop-girl in a passing throng, roller coasters, Madame Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors, my first flirtation, Pierre Louÿs, and springtime.

During the finish of the Grand National in 1913 (having backed a fifty-to-one shot to the extent of my ultimate farthing), I received a thrill that tingled to the little toe, for, seizing me by the arm and gazing soulfully into my eyes, was the delicious creature I had endeavored to meet for the past eight months. I recalled the next day that the fifty-to-one shot finished last.

I am thrilled by suggestion rather than fact, by memories rather than anticipation. Crowds, wrestling matches, Billy Sunday, poker dice, moving-pictures and parades have invariably failed to produce for me the glamour of a thrill. I am, however, strangely aroused when witnessing a French funeral.

A pretty girl's blush and the month of June combine to excite me far more than all the penny-in-the-slot peep shows ever devised. Also am I moved in no uncertain manner by certain thoroughfares of a rainy winter evening—lower Madison Avenue, East Fifty-ninth Street, upper Sixth Avenue, Waverly Mews. . . .



## Abandoned City

By John McClure

A MEMORY of lost faces  
Rises like a wraith from the sea  
On a salt and bitter wind.  
I should be afraid to look on those streets again  
Misty at evening:  
There is cruelty in vanishing images  
And I am afraid to remember,  
Awakened in a new country  
A long way from my dream.





# Répétition Générale

By George Jean Nathan and H. L. Mencken

## § 1

**P**acifism in Practice.—Three-fourths of the anti-war lodges that flourish in the United States are probably bogus. That is to say, they are chiefly supported, not by men who are honestly against *all* war, but by men who are simply against some specific war—usually the one between England and the United States that now begins to loom up so brilliantly. This is pre-eminently true of the peace society financed by the late Andrew Carnegie, and now continued by his dupes: I forget its precise name. Carnegie, a Scotsman born, remained a super-patriotic Britisher to the end of his days, and it was his dream to see the United States restored to the crown. As a means to this end, he sought to establish an intimate and unbreakable understanding between England and the Republic, with England doing the leading and the Republic doing the understanding—and as a preliminary measure he tried to make war between them impossible, or, at all events, enormously improbable. Hence all his disingenuous gabble about international peace and good-will. It deceived a large number of university presidents, members of the Lake Mohonk Conference, retired judges, Unitarian clergymen, newspaper editors and other such intellectual come-ons, but I doubt that it deceived anyone of anything properly describable as genuine intelligence. Most of the other peace societies, alas, run the same way—for example, the so-called League to Enforce Peace. This preposterous organization is simply a club of extravagant Anglomaniacs. During the years

1915 and 1916 it threw off all disguise, and devoted itself openly to rooting for the sweating Motherland. Now it resumes its old false-face, and carries on a diligent propaganda for getting the United States into the League of Nations, *i. e.*, for making the Department of State a sort of cuspidor in the British Foreign Office. It defines peace as a state of the world in which no armed resistance to British imperialism will be either lawful or possible.

Do any of the solemn cuckoos who belong to such societies really desire an end of war? Then why don't they execute the plan suggested by Dr. George W. Crile, the surgeon, during the late war? What Crile proposed was simply the dissemination of literature describing war as it actually is, chiefly by means of pictures. He gave a few samples in one of his own books—a portrait of a French soldier hit in the face by a one-pound German shell, another of a soldier with his arm chewed off by shrapnel, a third of a whole group of Frenchmen undergoing Christian burial in a long trench, apparently four or five weeks after the day they died for democracy. I have observed vast numbers of other such pictures in recent medical literature, including especially a series of views of nose, mouth and jaw wounds in one of the dental journals. What would it cost to print a book containing a hundred such appalling photographs, and to distribute 5,000,000 copies of it in the United States? It would cost less than the hotel and bootlegging bills for one Lake Mohonk Conference. And to flash the same pictures upon the screens of 50,000 movie parlors would be even cheaper.



It must be obvious that pacifism is very widespread just now among the plain people of America. They grasp eagerly at every proposed scheme to diminish the likelihood of more wars, including even such idiotic schemes as that launched at the late Disarmament Clown-Show—another sweet plan for keeping us at peace by making it impossible for us to resist England. This pacifism, I believe, has been spread by the returning conscripts, who went to the last war unwillingly, and were greatly horrified by what they saw there. But the average conscript, of course, saw relatively little. The American Army was but seldom in battle, and none of the battles that it fought was of the violence, say, of Verdun, the first fighting at the Marne, the siege of Antwerp, the sea battle in the North Sea, or the herculean combats before Lodz, and along the Somme and the Isonzo. The Argonne business, compared with these terrific struggles, was a parlor affair; its worst horrors are matched daily in the Pennsylvania coal and steel region. What is needed is a deliberate assembling of all the most frightful pictures that now repose in the medical archives of all the contesting armies—not wordy descriptions and arguments, but simply pictures. It would cost less than \$100,000 to distribute these pictures from end to end of the United States. The effect would be electrical: the boobery would be scared half to death. And, once so scared, it would demand instant disarmament.

I revive Dr. Crile's suggestion, I need not add, not as a pacifist, but merely as a consultant in mob psychology. Personally, I am not in favor of international peace. War seems to me to be not only necessary, but also admirable, particularly when it is waged scientifically and without moral passion. I can't rid myself of the superstition that General Ludendorff, in some indefinable way, is a better man than Charles E. Hughes, Elihu Root or William Jennings Bryan. But the opposition makes such a mess of its campaign that I am

impelled to offer it aid. It may have this picture scheme with my compliments.

## § 2

*No. LVI.*—A woman is charming in the degree that her body outdoes her mind in the matter of unsophistication.

## § 3

*On a Certain Phrase.*—One grows weary of the constant reiteration, by novelists, critics and such, of the phrase "the meaninglessness of life." What do they seek in life and of it, these gloomy ones? Life, true, may be meaningless; but life is a great show none the less, and, like all great shows, is properly, appropriately and happily meaningless. What, may one ask of these dour fellows, is the meaning of a circus? Or of the "Follies"? Or of the Derby? Or of "Hamlet"? Or of Beethoven's seventh symphony? Or of Michelangelo's ceiling in the Sistine Chapel? Or of a pretty girl? Or of a bottle of Pol Roger 1911?

## § 4

*The Rat-Trap.*—Much of the discontent with modern marriage centers in the fact that the laws which condition it and safeguard it all assume that its purpose is the founding of a family. This was unquestionably its purpose when those laws were devised, say two thousand years ago, but that purpose, at least among the civilized minority, is now almost forgotten. Very few educated men of today, it seems to me, have any notion of founding a family in mind when they marry. Their vanity takes different forms; moreover, they have rejected the old doctrine that they have any duty in the premises; the *Stammhalter* has pretty well disappeared from their visions. Most of them, it is probable, marry without any intelligible purpose whatever. Women flatter them, mark them down and lure them to the holy altar: everything else is after-



thought. Many an American man finds himself on the brink of marriage without ever having given any sober thought even to so important a matter as the probable charm of his wife-elect as mistress. This explains many connubial calamities.

As things stand, the only legal relief from uncomfortable marriages is afforded by divorce. Every other workable device is frowned upon, and most of them are punished. The chief purpose of legal divorce, of course, is to protect the children of the marriage, *i. e.*, to safeguard the family. But the scheme is clumsy, expensive and cruel. To employ it is to cut off a leg in order to cure what may be, after all, merely a barked shin—worse, what may be no injury at all. Suppose there *are* no children? Suppose the marriage is entered upon with the clear understanding that there *shall* be no children? In the latter case it is obviously insane to surround it with safeguards for the family that will never exist. As well insure a pile of bricks against fire. What is needed is legal recognition of such marriages—recognition that will establish decorum and fair play within their actual limits, but that will not seek to burden them with conditions that look quite outside their limits. Human inertia and sentimentality, of course, will be a long while countenancing any such change. Until quite recently a marriage without children was utterly impossible, save as an act of God, and so the inevitable, by a familiar process, was converted into the creditable. This nonsense survives, despite the disappearance of the excuse for it. It is still believed, by the great majority of human beings, that there is something mysteriously laudable about achieving viable offspring. I have searched the sacred and profane scriptures for many years, but have yet to find any logical ground for this notion. To have a child is no more creditable than to have rheumatism—and no more discreditable. Ethically, it is absolutely meaningless. And practically, it is mainly a matter of chance.

§ 5

*In Defence of Prohibition.*—Myself, like George Washington, a patriotic American boozier and one determined to remain loyal if I have to move to Canada to do so, I am yet surely not fool enough to deny that the advocates of prohibition have a number of very good arguments on their side. It is certainly true, as they argue, that no man who has had a number of drinks can do his work so well and so conscientiously as the man who has had none. As for me, if I have so much as *one* drink, work is out of the question for the rest of the day. It is also certainly true that drinking depletes one's savings, and eventually does damage in one way or another to one's constitution, and leads to indiscretions of this or that kind, and makes one feel on occasion like beating up some objectionable person. Such allegations of the prohibitionists are surely not without a certain foundation in fact. All that I see that I can do about it is to agree regretfully with the prohibitionists, and continue to enjoy myself.

§ 6

*On Lying.*—One of the laudable by-products of the Freudian necromancy is the discovery that lying, in most cases, is involuntary and inevitable—that the liar can no more avoid it than he can avoid blinking his eyes when a light flashes or jumping when a bomb goes off behind him. At its worst, indeed, this necessity takes on a downright pathological character, and is thus as innocent as sciatica or albuminuria. It is part of the morbid baggage of hysterics and neurasthenics: their lying is simply a symptom of their compulsive effort to adjust themselves to an environment which bears upon them too harshly for endurance. The rest of us are not quite so hard pushed, but pushed we all are. In us the thing works through the inferiority complex, which no man can escape. He who lacks it entirely is actually reckoned insane by



the fact: his satisfaction with his situation in the world is indistinguishable from a delusion of grandeur. The great majority of us—all, in brief, who are normal—pass through life in constant revolt against our limitations, objective and subjective. Our conscious thought is largely devoted to plans and specifications for cutting a better figure in human society, and in our unconscious mind the business goes on much more steadily and powerfully. No healthy man, in his secret heart, is content with his destiny. Even the late Woodrow, during his dizzy term as the peer of Lincoln and Washington, was obviously tantalized by the reflection that, in earlier ages, there had been Martin Luther, St. Ignatius Loyola and Paul of Tarsus. We are tortured by such dreams and images as a child is tortured by the thought of a state of existence in which it would live in a candy-store and have two stomachs. The more we try to put the obscene apparition away, the more it haunts and badgers us.

Lying is the product of the unconscious yearning to realize such visions, and if the policeman, conscience, prevents the lie being put into plain words, then it is at least put into more or less plausible acts. We all play parts when we face our fellow-men, as even poets have noticed. No man could bring himself to reveal his true character, and, above all, his true limitations as a citizen and a Christian, his true meannesses, his true imbecilities, to his friends, or even to his wife. Honest autobiography is therefore a contradiction in terms: the moment a man considers himself, even *in petto*, he tries to gild and fresco himself. Thus a man's wife, however realistic her view of him, always flatters him in the end, for the worst she sees in him is appreciably better, by the time she sees it, than what is actually there. What she sees, even at times of the most appalling domestic revelation and confidence, is not the authentic man at all, but a compound made up in part of the authentic man and in part of his projection of a gaudy ideal.

The man who is most respected by his wife is the one who makes this projection most vivid—that is, the one who is the most daring and ingratiating liar. He can never, of course, deceive her utterly, but if he is skilful he may at least deceive her enough to make her happy.

*Omnis homo mendax*: thus the Psalmist. So far the Freudians merely parrot him. What is new in their gospel is the doctrine that lying is instinctive, normal, and unavoidable—that a man is forced into it by his very will-to-live. This doctrine purges the business of certain ancient embarrassments, and restores innocence to the heart. Think of a lie as a compulsion neurose, and you think of it more kindly. I need not add, I hope, that this transfer of it from the department of free will to that of determinism by no means disposes of the penalty that traditionally pursues it, supposing it to be detected and re-sented. The proponents of free will always make the mistake of assuming that the determinists are simply evil fellows looking for a way to escape the just consequences of their transgressing. No sense is in that assumption. If I lie on the witness-stand and am detected by the judge, I am jailed for perjury forthwith, regardless of my helplessness under compulsion. Here justice refuses absolutely to distinguish between a misfortune and a tort: the overt act is all it is concerned with. But as jurisprudence grows more intelligent and more civilized it may change its tune, to the benefit of liars, which is to say to the benefit of humanity. Science is unflinchingly deterministic, and it has begun to force its determinism into morals. We no longer flog a child afflicted with nocturnal enuresis; we have substituted concepts of mental aberration for concepts of crime in a whole series of cases: kleptomania-shoplifting, pyromania-arson, etc.; and, in the United States at least, the old savage punishment of murderers is now ameliorated by considerations of psychiatry and even of honor. On some shining



tomorrow a psychoanalyst may be put into the box to prove that perjury is simply a compulsion neurose, like beating time with the foot at a concert or counting the lamp-posts along a highway.

However, I have but small faith in millenniums, and do not formally predict this one. Nor do I pronounce any moral judgment, pro or con: moral judgments, as old Friedrich used to say, are foreign to my nature. But let us not forget that lying, *per se*, is not forbidden by the moral code of Christendom. Holy Writ dismisses it cynically, and the statutes of all civilized states are silent about it. Only the Chinese, indeed, make it a penal offense. Perjury, of course, is prohibited everywhere, and also any mendacity which amounts to fraud and so deprives a fellow-man of his property, but that far more common form of truth-stretching which has only the lesser aim of augmenting the liar's personal dignity and consequence—this is looked upon with a very charitable eye. So is that form which has the aim of helping another person in the same way. In the latter direction lying may even take on the stature of a positive virtue. The late King Edward VII, when Prince of Wales, attained to great popularity throughout Christendom by venturing into downright perjury. Summoned into a court of law to give expert testimony regarding some act of adultery, he "lied like a gentleman," as the phrase goes, to protect a woman. The lie, to be sure, was intrinsically useless; no one believed that the lady was innocent. Nevertheless, every decent Christian applauded the perjurer for his good intentions, including even the judge on the bench, sworn to combat false witness by every resource of forensics. All of us, worms that we are, occasionally face the alternatives that confronted Edward. On the one hand, we may tell the truth, regardless of consequences, and on the other hand we may mellow it and sophisticate it to make it humane and tolerable. It is universally held, save by the Chinese, that the man who chooses

the first course is despicable. He may be highly moral, but he is nevertheless a cad—as highly moral men have so curious a way of being. But if he lies boldly, then he is held to be a man of honor, and is respected as such by all other men of honor.

For the habitual truth-teller and truth-seeker, indeed, the world has very little liking. He is always unpopular, and not infrequently his unpopularity is so excessive that it endangers his life. Run your eye back over the list of martyrs, lay and clerical: nine-tenths of them, you will find, stood accused of nothing worse than honest efforts to find out and announce the truth. Even today, with the scientific passion become familiar in the world, the general view of such fellows is highly unfavorable. The typical scientist, the typical critic of institutions, the typical truth-seeker in every other field is held under suspicion by the great majority of men, and variously beset by posses of relentless foes. If he tries to find out the truth about arteriosclerosis, or surgical shock, or cancer, he is denounced as a scoundrel by the Christian Scientists, the osteopaths and the anti-vivisectionists. If he tries to tell the truth about the government, its agents seek to silence him and punish him. If he turns to fiction and endeavors to depict his fellow-men accurately, he has the Comstocks on his hands. In no field can he count upon a friendly audience, and freedom from assault. Especially in the United States is his whole enterprise viewed with bilious eye. The men the American people admire most extravagantly are the most daring liars; the men they detest most violently are those who try to tell them the truth. A Galileo could no more be elected President of the United States than he could be elected Pope of Rome. Both high posts are reserved for men favored by God with an extraordinary genius for swathing the bitter facts of life in bandages of soft illusion.

Behind this almost unanimous distrust of the truth-teller there is a sound and sure instinct, as there is behind



every other manifestation of crowd feeling. What it shows is simply this: that the truth is something too harsh and devastating for the majority of men to bear. In their secret hearts they know themselves, and they can suffer the thought of themselves only by idealizing the facts. The more trivial, loathsome and degraded the reality, the more powerful and relentless must be the idealization. An Aristotle, I daresay, may be able occasionally to regard himself searchingly and dispassionately—but certainly not an ordinary man. Here we come back to what we began with: the inferiority complex. The truth-seeker forgets it, and so comes to grief. He forgets that the ordinary man, at bottom, is always afraid of himself, as of some horrible monster. He refuses to sanction the lie whereby the ordinary man maintains his self-respect, just as the bounder, put upon the stand, refuses to support the lie whereby a woman maintains the necessary theory of her chastity. Thus he is unpopular, and deserves to be.

Then why does he go on? Why does he kick up such a pother and suffer such barbarous contumely, all to no end—for the majority of so-called truths, it must be evident, perish as soon as they are born: no one will believe them. The answer probably is that the truth-seeker is moved by the same "obscure inner necessity" (in Joseph Conrad's phrase) that animates the artist. Something within him, something entirely beyond his volition, forces him to pursue his fanatical and useless quest—some impulse as blind as that which moves a puppy to chase its tail. Again the compulsion neurose! But this one differs materially from that of the liar. The latter is hygienic; it makes for peace, health, happiness. The former makes only for strife and discontent. It invades the immemorial pruderies of the human race. It breeds scandals and heart-burnings. It is essentially anti-social, and hence, by modern theories of criminology, diseased. The truth-seeker thus becomes a pathological

case. The average man is happily free from any such malaise. He avoids the truth as diligently as he avoids arson, regicide or piracy on the high seas, and for the same reason: because he believes that it is dangerous, that no good can come of it, that it doesn't pay. The very thought of it is abhorrent to him. This average man, I believe, must be accepted as the normal man, the natural man, the healthy and useful man. He presents a character that is general in the race, and favorable to its security and contentment. The truth never caresses; it stings—and life is surely too short for sane men to be stinging themselves unnecessarily. One would regard it as idiotic even in a flea.

Thus the truth about the truth emerges, and with it the truth about lying. Lying is not only excusable; it is not only innocent, and instinctive; it is, above all, necessary and unavoidable. Without the ameliorations that it offers life would become a mere syllogism, and hence too metallic to be born. The man who lies simply submits himself sensibly to the grand sweep and ripple of the cosmic process. The man who seeks and tells the truth is a rebel against the inner nature of all of us.

## § 7

*Democratic America.*—I am writing this paragraph on Monday, May 15. At my elbow lies a copy of the *New York World*, a representative American newspaper, of the same date. On the first page, I observe a photograph of Princess Elizabeth of Greece and a grave article describing an operation that she has just undergone. Another article on the same page runs as follows:

BUCHAREST, May 14.—The King and Queen of Roumania immediately left here for Constanza on receipt of word to-day from Athens that Princess Elizabeth was dangerously ill. The fastest warship will convey them to Piræus. They left the bedside of their youngest daughter, Princess Ileana, who is suffering from chickenpox, to go to Athens.

Still another article on this first page is this:



MANILA, May 14.—The Prince of Wales, with blackened eye and bandaged forehead, lunched with Gov. Gen. Leonard A. Wood of the Philippines to-day.

The Prince, who was hit by a polo ball yesterday, insisted he again would play polo to-morrow upon returning from Cavite.

The Prince slept late this morning and consequently his proposed trip to Fort McKinley with Gen. Wood was abandoned. He also had planned to attend church, but this was prohibited by his physician.

In the late afternoon the Prince was the guest of Manila's British community at a tea dance at the Manila Club. To-night he gave a dinner aboard the *Renown*.

Also on this first page is a long account of Queen Marie of Roumania and her plan to visit the United States. This article runs over onto the second page, which contains a two-column cut of the Queen. The two middle columns of the first page are taken up with a poem by Rudyard Kipling entitled "The King's Pilgrimage," with this footnote: "Recently he (Kipling) visited the battlefields on the west front, accompanying King George and Queen Mary of England and King Albert and Queen Elizabeth of the Belgians."

Also on this first page is the following:

BRUSSELS, May 14.—King Albert has decorated Samuel Hill of Seattle with the Order of Commander of the Crown of Belgium.

In a corner of page five there is a paragraph about President Harding.

### § 8

*The Soul of the Artist.*—Few artists have what is commonly denominated "the soul of an artist." The true artist's soul is often indistinguishable from that of one who is not an artist and whose life is devoted to more prosaic activities. The soul of an artist is generally to be found in an alien body, inarticulate, futile, and not a little grotesque. I have known intimately many artists, all of them first-rate. While their work may have breathed the soul of an artist, they personally were psychically not to be told apart from so many men in the street.

They did not look like artists, or talk like artists, or dress like artists, or act like artists, or—out of their studios—even feel like artists. Show me the man with "the soul of an artist" and nine times in ten I'll show you a man whose artistic achievement is deaf, dumb and blind. Art is a practical thing. The artist does not paint by moonlight or write in a flower-bed.

### § 9

*The Classics.*—Some time ago the estimable *New Republic* was deploring the fact that, in a ballot taken among certain professional critics, Cicero got fewer votes than Oscar Wilde. A deplorable evidence of the extent to which school-room superstitions survive, even among Liberals. Why in the world *shouldn't* Cicero get fewer votes than Wilde? Or, for that matter, than Joseph Conrad, or Gerhart Hauptmann, or even Dreiser? I can pump up no sensible reason. The great majority of the surviving works of Cicero, to the average educated man of today, are of no more active interest than the dithyrambs of Martin Tupper. The subjects they deal with are remote from his life, and the language they are written in is strange and vague to him, even when he makes shift to read it. If he pretends that he is interested in Cicero, then he is either a preposterous pedant or a singularly transparent liar. Even professional Latinists do not attempt any such fraud. Their attention is concentrated upon the grammar of Cicero, not upon his ideas, which is just like saying that one admires Chartres cathedral because the roof doesn't leak. Latinists have no more love for Latin literature, as literature, than surgeons have for gall-stones.

Do not misunderstand me. I am not trying to disparage Cicero, and to argue that he is not worth remembering. He is worth remembering precisely as Charlemagne is worth remembering—because he was an important man in his time, and because some of his ideas



have entered into the common stock of all of us. But let us not pretend vainly that he remains a living man. He is to be respected as our dead great-grand-fathers are respected, not loved as we love our friends. To most civilized men of today Oscar Wilde is enormously more alive and interesting, and hence more important. His ideas come closer to all of us; his ways of thought are ours; his language is a reality to us. Set beside him, Cicero becomes a mere fly imbedded in amber. He was no man of the first class, like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle; he was not even of the second class, like Plutarch, Euripides, Aristophanes, Horace, Virgil and Thucydides. The ideas of all these men were revolutionary and profound; they survive to this day, and so the men who loosed them upon the world remain alive. But the Ciceros are third-raters. They survive only artificially. We do them sufficient honor if we remember their names.

## § 10

*Marriage.*—The fact that marriage between older persons—a man over forty, say, and a woman over thirty-five—seldom turns out unhappily, or at least endures till death the twain parts, is one of the best possible proofs, it seems to me, of my long-held contention that nothing is more greatly inimical to a happy marriage than a sense of romance. It is, of course, possible that romance may also attach to a marriage between such older persons as I have alluded to, but the romance in this case, where it exists at all, exists very largely in terms of present and retrospect rather than, as in marriages between younger persons, in terms of the present and the future. The young man and young woman regard the altar romantically as a starting point—and Time chuckles to himself in the rear pew. The older man and the older woman, on the other hand, regard the altar more calmly and dispassionately as a comfortable haven after life's alternately joyous and

trouble-fraught voyage—and Time may snicker all he cares to, in vain. Romance is for passionate love; and passionate love has no more enduring place in marriage than the moon has in the broad, hard light of day.

## § 11

*Human Ingenuity.*—Man has invented the telephone, the flying machine, the steamboat, and the automobile. But he has not yet been able to invent a pair of nose glasses that will remain accurately in place, a cure for neuralgia, a sufficiently large umbrella that will roll into convenient shape and size, or a satisfactory soft drink.

## § 12

*Note on Publishers.*—One of the mysteries of the publishing trade is to be found in the incomprehensible system by which review copies of new books are distributed. I have been reviewing books for fifteen years past, and have had that system under my eye all the while, and yet I no more understand it today than I understand liturgical Old Slavic. Whenever I find an author who pleases me and take to praising him lavishly and calling upon all Christian men to buy him and read him, his publisher is sure to stop sending me his books. And if, on the contrary, I try some poor devil of a scribbler by the *lex taleonis* and do execution upon him with Ku Klux frightfulness, his publisher invariably sends me all of his ensuing works, and favors me with idiotic circular letters testifying to their merit. The Barabbasian skull seems to be of four-ply celluloid; it takes a fearful battering to penetrate it. Or can it be that publishers never read reviews? I begin to harbor a suspicion that way. It is supported by the obvious fact that they never read the books they publish.

## § 13

*Zola.*—Why doesn't some enterprising publisher venture upon a complete



and unexpurgated edition of Zola in English, or at least of his Rougon-Macquart series of novels? His later work, and particularly the series called "Les Quatre Évangiles," is of small value. But the great works of his middle period, beginning with "La Fortune des Rougons," belong to the flower of the world's prose fiction. At least four of them, "L'Assommoir," "Nana," "Germinal" and "La Débâcle," are indubitable masterpieces. Allow all you please for Zola's ardent pursuit of scientific half-truths, for his air of an anatomist dismembering a corpse, for what Nietzsche, in a bitter moment, called his "delight to stink," and you still have an acute and penetrating observer of the human comedy, a creator of vivid and memorable characters, an extraordinarily adroit and earnest craftsman.

Zola, I am well aware, did not invent naturalism. But it must be obvious that his propaganda, as novelist and critic, did more than any other one thing to give naturalism direction and coherence and to break down its antithesis, the sentimental romanticism of the middle Nineteenth Century—"Uncle Tom's Cabin," "David Copperfield," "La Dame aux Camélias"—and that his influence today, even if he has few avowed disciples, is still wide and undeniable. The thing he introduced into the novel was the conception of man as a mammal—man swayed and fashioned, not by the fiats and conspiracies of a mysterious camorra of arbitrary gods, but by natural laws, by food and drink, by blood and environment. He taught his fellow craftsman to sit down in patience before a fact, to trace out its cause, to see it largely, not as something *in vacuo*, but as something fitting into an inevitable and unemotional process. You will find his tracks all over the modern novel, in all countries. In so far as it is significant of our time, in so far as it belongs assertively to today and not to some golden yesterday, it reflects the principles and practise of Émile Zola.

And yet there is no satisfactory

edition of Zola in English! Is it because he is utterly without prudery? Then why do the book-agents sell de Maupassant by the gaudy set and Rabelais in scarlet volumes? Is it because his shock of novelty is gone? Then why do they sell Flaubert and Daudet, D'Annunzio and Tolstoi—and why the Ibsen for the newly-intellectual, in thirteen stately volumes, with photogravures and deckle edges? The real truth is, I suppose, that the neglect of Zola is an accidental overlooking. Some day an idle publisher will stumble upon the opportunity lying open, and then we shall have the sixteen volumes of the Rougon-Macquart series, properly Englished and entirely unexpurgated. Meanwhile, that student of Zola who hath no French must root in second-hand book-stores for stray volumes of the original Vizetelly edition, suppressed by the British police and since grown more and more rare. The prevailing price of "Nana," in the 1885, octavo form, is \$15 or \$20 a copy—and a copy is not to be had every day. Even the novels that were reissued, after the prosecution of Vizetelly, in bowdlerized, dephlogisticated versions, are now bringing substantial premiums.

#### § 14

*Melodrama.*—Of all forms of theatrical entertainment, melodrama possesses perhaps the greatest intrinsic integrity. As the stage is designed to exaggerate and intensify life, so melodrama is similarly designed. Thus, more exactly than comedy, tragedy, farce or satire, does melodrama meet the demands of the stage. Comedy touches life too closely to come within the accurate, fundamental, unadorned principle of the theatre. Tragedy is but another form of comedy, a paraphrase, so to speak. Farce exaggerates life, but does not, by virtue of its humors, intensify it. And satire is, obviously, not a pure theatrical form. Melodrama alone meets the theatre's every law and by-law. It is the blood of the stage.



## § 15

*Addendum to the American Credo.*—That various articles of the American credo which were printed not long ago in two numbers of the periodical called *Life* had not already been printed in the book called "The American Credo."

## § 16

*Encore.*—Of all the things that may make a woman unattractive to men, contentiousness is perhaps the first. A woman, however beautiful, becomes instantaneously unalluring if her mood is argumentative and combative. What a man seeks in a woman is peace, quiet and agreement, however idiotic his acts or assertions. Show him such a woman, and he is hers.

## § 17

*Spreading American Kultur.*—Interesting contribution to American cultural history and to the intelligent observance of the Grant Centenary, issued by a Philadelphia tract society under the title of "Conversion and Christian Experience of Mrs. Mary Grant Cramer, sister of General U. S. Grant":

In my childhood I used to be very much interested in reading Sabbath school books, though this reading was like the seed sown on rocky soil. At the age of fourteen I united with the Church, and continued to be a member of the Church in what I fear was an unconverted state until I was grown up.

One of the difficulties that lay in my way was that if I ever was converted I must love to read the Bible, and I thought I could never like reading this Book so as to love it. Another difficulty was that I thought I should have to talk to people about their salvation, and if they gave me rebuff, that would almost kill me.

I was in a peculiar condition. Our house had been a home for ministers, and I had gone to church and prayer meeting regularly, and yet I had not become a Christian. Well, I said, I will give up that form of self-righteousness and be willing to be converted in God's own way. This was a wonderfully happy day to me. Among other experiences I soon found it was not hard to speak about religion to others. When my husband was appointed Minister of our Government to Euro-

pean countries he used to preach, for you know he was a preacher, and would testify for the Saviour as opportunity offered. This was not always easy, for in diplomatic circles one must be very circumspect. A foreign minister who called upon my husband on diplomatic affairs said to me, "We must not talk about religion." But it has always been my delight to speak of the love of God in Jesus Christ for all men. While at a European court we had a visit from Lord Radstock, a godly man, and he preached six times in our parlors. It was a great pleasure to me to invite many people of rank to hear him. Notwithstanding the court etiquette, which forbids anyone speaking to royalty until first addressed, I had an opportunity of speaking to one of the princesses on the subject of religion, and our interview has left a happy memory in my mind.

And an even happier one, no doubt, in the legends of that court.

## § 18

*Dramatic Criticism.*—I quote from *The Dial*:

Mr. O'Neill begins with the stokers' bunks on a liner, the air, the language, the emotions equally thick; and with lapses to be noted proceeds through a gradual conventionalizing of things, and a slow abstraction of emotions, to a climax in which he presents as something actually happening, the phantasms of the protagonist's brain. From that point on it does not matter how "real" anything appears; what matters only, as always in the theatre, is what is effective.

Who will deny that, so far as mere effectiveness in the theatre goes, "The Bat," for example, doesn't "matter" ten times more—and isn't therefore by *The Dial's* standard a greater work of dramatic art—than, say, Heijermans' "The Good Hope" or Hauptmann's "Michael Kramer"?

## § 19

*The Dinner Party.*—Of all forms of social diversion, the dinner party is the most terrible. No man of the average grace and intelligence ever accepts an invitation to such an affair if he can conceivably get out of doing so. Look around the table the next time you are stuck, and observe the men present.



Listen for a few moments to their conversation, and note their general aspect and deportment. Then sneak out to the pantry under one pretext or another and get drunk with the butler.

§ 20

*On Censors.*—To object to this or

that man as an official censor of the arts on the ground that he is illiterate and an ignoramus is absurd. The object of all official censorship is to make the arts safe for the illiterate and ignorant portion of the public. It requires an illiterate and ignorant man to understand such a public, and to stake out the boundaries of its tastes.



## Michelangelo

*By Elizabeth J. Coatsworth*

THERE was a man now dead four hundred years,  
A broken-nosed, brow-wrinkled, dwarfish man,  
A sort of chained-up bear, nursing his ear,  
Who had a mind that could not look but see  
Some massive beauty, and a hand that made  
Each thing it touched a monument of power.  
An angel was his godfather; he was nursed  
Among the stone-cutters of the quarried hills;  
Popes were his gossips; and she he loved  
Was his friend also; as for family—  
Art was his wife and Fame his only son.



WHEN a man's wife doesn't come home, he begins to wonder what has happened to her. When a woman's husband doesn't come home, she begins to wonder who the hussy is.



AWOMAN may not always be equal to the occasion, but she is usually equal to the occasional.





# His Public

*By Herbert J. Mangham*

## I

TO the crowd on the street, the sign-painter seemed a tiny marionette operating a mechanical arm. Simons, the painter, likened the people below to a lot of earthworms thrusting their heads out of the ground and twisting them this way and that to see what they could see. The sickly white faces, upturned in idle curiosity, amused him and gave him a feeling of importance. Sometimes they annoyed him: they seemed to be only partially satisfied, to want more than they were getting!

He was reminded of his one visit to the Grand Opera. His wife had been made to feel that it was an experience necessary to the family. The children had come home from school babbling fragmentary versions of lectures on the benefits of "good music," and the Dugans had never ceased relating the details of their evening at the Metropolitan Opera House, where they had heard Caruso and Geraldine Farrar. Mrs. Simons decided that a night at the Metropolitan was indispensable both to the advancement of the family culture and the maintenance of their social standing.

For the equivalent of several tickets to the movies, Simons had purchased seats in the gallery on a night when they could hear Farrar, whom they had seen on the screen. The prima donna had appeared almost as small to him as he now did to the white faces below him. He had sat for hours, seemingly, watching in wonderment and waiting for the occasional snatches of melody that he could understand and appreci-

ate. At times he would have paid the price of admission again to have her walk down to the footlights and sing something about mothers and the River Shannon!

Speculations on the subject continued to occupy his mind on the way home. On the street he was no longer of importance. The scurrying crowd was not aware of his existence, except momentarily, when an individual collided with him. It was only when he was on his scaffolding, his stage, that he was serving his mission. Then he became the actor, the curious crowds his public.

What was it that this public wanted? Why the sense of expectancy? So engrossed had he become in his meditations that he walked almost a block past his home.

His preoccupation lost its hold upon him for a time when he entered the front hallway and fell under the massed attack of his two pairs of "twins," as he chose to call them. Of course neither Johnny nor Lorine was a pair of twins, but either, so said the father, might have been, judging from the noise they made and the clothing that they so quickly wore out.

He followed a most alluring odor to the kitchen, where his wife was bending over the stove. Nan Simons was a large, vigorously attractive woman. Still young, motherhood had but amplified her generous curves and effected an animal perfection.

Simons slipped an arm about her waist and kissed the ripe cheek that she offered to him.

"What have we tonight?" he asked, peering over her shoulder. "Aa—aa—



ah! Pot roast and dumplings! That's what I get when I kiss the cook!"

He playfully scraped her ear with the twenty-four-hours' growth of beard on his chin, and was rewarded with a connubial slap. Filling a basin at the sink, he washed the evidence of his day's work from his face and hands, shaved, and drew a chair up to the kitchen table, which by this time was loaded.

As he ate, his abstraction returned. The children's irresponsible prattle and Nan's monitory commands blended in a confused, scarcely audible murmur.

"What you talking so much for?"

Simons started. Nan and the children were looking at him and laughing.

"Oh, I was just thinking," he replied.

"Is that all? By the expression on your face we thought maybe you had a stomach-ache!"

The children found the witticism excruciatingly funny.

"Just you be quiet now!" complained Simons good-humoredly. "You-uns is always pickin' on me 'cause I'm little!"

The children's merriment increased, until Johnny had to lay down his spoon and hold both hands tightly to his abdomen.

Simons resumed his eating and his reflections.

While the table was being cleared, he got an evening paper and settled comfortably into the parlor easy-chair, where the light from the lamp would fall over his shoulder.

Johnny and Lorine, as a reward for helping with the dishes, were allowed to go to the Dugans' to spend the evening. There was a wild scrambling for coats and hats, repeated admonitions and promises to "Come home early," and the front door slammed, shocking the house into a surprised silence.

Nan entered the parlor after a few minutes with an armload of outraged clothing.

"I declare," she said, spreading the garments out on her lap, "what those kids of yours do to their clothes is more 'n a mystery to me! Only last Thursday I mended everything they had, and now

look! That blue gingham is new, too!"

Simons laid down his paper, from which twenty minutes of reading had failed to extract a single intelligible idea, and watched his wife while she bit off a thread and skilfully inserted it through the eye of a needle.

"Nan!"

His wife looked up inquiringly.

"Do you know," he said, searching awkwardly for words to express ideas that were still amorphous, "sometimes I wonder—you remember when we went to the Grand Opera? Well, sometimes I think I'm kinda like Geraldine Farrar!"

Nan shrieked with laughter.

"Oh, dear," she said, dabbing at her streaming eyes, "you'll be the death of me yet. Geraldine Farrar! Oh, oh! Come over here and let me give you my earrings and put a rose in your mouth. Then you'll be her spittin' image!" Her shoulders shook with merriment. "Is that what's been on your mind all evening? Well, I don't like to be cruel, honey, but just take a look in the mirror."

"Give me a chance to say something!" reproved Simons, with injured dignity.

"All right, go ahead! I can stand a lot of explanation!"

"Don't you remember how we sat there watching, it seemed almost a mile off, just watching and waiting for some pretty music—"

"Why, it was all pretty!" protested Nan.

"I couldn't get a bit of it," asserted Simons, "and I don't think anyone else could either."

"But where do you and Geraldine come in?"

"Well, all those people that are always watching 'way down below me are kinda like we were up there in the gallery. It's my audience, don't you see? They're just away off there watching and waiting—I dunno for what. It isn't just that fool painting that they're watching!"

"I haven't the slightest idea what you're talking about," averred Nan, "and I don't believe you have either."



"Maybe they're just waitin' to see me fall!" hazarded Simons.

"Jake Simons!" ejaculated Nan. "Don't never let me hear you say anything like that again!"

She sewed silently for a few minutes, while Simons traced figures upon the red table-cover with his thumb-nail.

Nan began to giggle again.

"Oh, you Geraldine!" she caroled, waving gaily across the table.

## II

SIMONS wielded his brushes mechanically the following morning. Occasionally he would pause and look down at his "audience" thoughtfully.

He stood up on the scaffolding and walked its full length, laughing at the sensations he was probably causing behind those indistinguishable upturned faces.

"Sickly white faces!" he muttered. "You thought you might see me fall, now, didn't you? Guess again!"

He returned the brush to the bucket of red paint.

"I'm through with it," he said. "You can have it."

He pushed the bucket with his toe and watched it for what seemed a full two minutes in its downward flight. The movement of the crowd told him that the paint had splashed several victims, and he chuckled as he imagined the screams and indignation.

"You wanted a sensation," he said, "and you got it! I suppose somebody will put in a complaint and I will get a bawling out. See if I care!"

He considered throwing the green paint, too, but decided that it would be an anti-climax.

"What you want," he growled, "is to see me go the way of the paint! You'd like to see my head busted open, my brains scattered over the pavement, and my body crumpled in a heap!"

He smiled with grim satisfaction at the word-picture he had drawn.

"Yes, you earthworms!" he added.

"Even if it meant that Nan and the kids should be left to starve!"

That suggested another picture—glaring headlines and a long story in the paper, with photographs of himself and family and the scene of the accident, a cross marking the exact spot upon which he lit; Nan bending over a washboard, and the kids taken out of school to sell papers on the streets.

He stood up and deliberately slipped from the scaffolding, swinging himself back into place by a rope.

"There!" he laughed. "Thought I was a goner that time, didn't you?"

He walked feverishly back and forth, brandishing his arms.

"You bloodthirsty hounds!" he shouted. "You just want a sensation, don't you? Anything for a thrill!"

He shook his fists. The action gave him a little spasm of dizziness. The windows in the wall below him seemed to stretch away to infinity.

*"All right, damn you! You'll get it!"*

Balancing on his toes for an instant, he leaned slightly forward, with arms extended, and dived as if from a spring-board. He was conscious that his body was describing a perfect arc, and as he started downward in headlong flight, he could imagine the thousands of eyes centered upon him, the thousands of hearts suddenly frozen, the paralysis of traffic. His deliberation of movement had made his purpose unmistakable.

With gathering velocity, his body hurtled past story after story until it struck the pavement. The crowd jostled about him. . . .

"What do you suppose the nut did it for?" asked one girl on the edge of the crowd; and then, as her straining eyes caught a glimpse of the shapeless mass that had once been Jake Simons, "Aw, come on, let's beat it! He looks too damn mussy!"

Unfortunately, Simons had never heard of that infallible axiom of the theatre: *"Always leave them wanting more."*





*Americanization:  
A Movie*

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*By  
William Gropper*





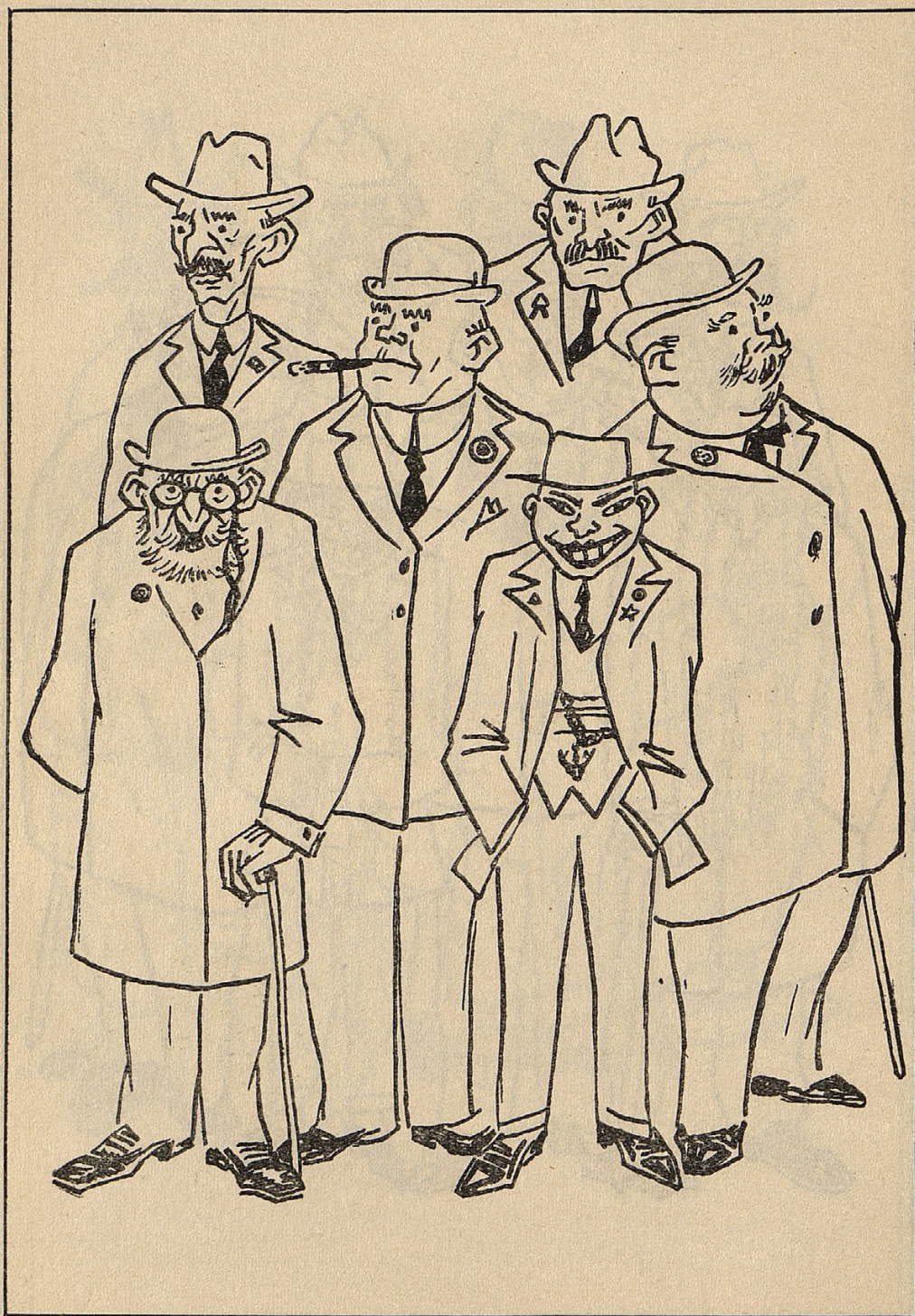
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Reel II: 10%





*Reel III: 50%*





Reel IV: 100%



# Summer Dusk

*By Virginia Taylor McCormick*

THE attenuated hum of bees  
And children's voices . . .  
Dropping from my linden trees  
The robins' friendly noises.

The sun has left a crimson stain  
Across the west . . .  
As if to greet with gay disdain  
Its fainter palimpsest.

All through the flaming day I wait  
This beauty stark,  
That hovers nun-like, celibate,  
In the new dark.

Here where the dancing shadows fall  
Through filagree,  
Memory raises the black pall  
From death's great mystery.

Here in the dim-lit aisles of dusk,  
You come again ;  
Here I may find youth's battered husk  
To ease my pain.



*THERE are really only two things of interest about a woman—her morals and her wardrobe.*



*SOME girls know nearly everything and the others know the rest.*





# The Pagan

By Lynn Montross

THIAN KIT LIN, pagan, has received an invitation to Christmas dinner. Between the long thumb and forefinger of a hand that covered his lean knee like sharp, outspread petals, he held the square envelope. The invitation itself, which was printed in scroll upon heavy, creamy paper, read:

In this, the joyous Yuletide season, the time of "peace on earth and good will to men," every heart in the University should be glad. To the students who have come from far climes to our university and who have no homes in the country, their fellow students and townsmen wish to extend the best wishes for the traditional Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

It is furthermore our wish that you honor this home by accepting an invitation to Christmas dinner. And when you break the bread of good fellowship with them, may you know that the hearts of all students in the State University beat in sympathy with you and your splendid ambitions.

In the blank line below was written in a round hand in which the letter "e" was quite disconnected from the rest of the script, the name and address: "*Mrs. James R. Elkins, 637 West Plum Street.*"

The mailman who had brought the invitation could be seen two blocks down the street as Thian Kit Lin looked through the window and slowly tapped his knee. The sidewalks that had been thronged a few days before with students passing and repassing on their way to classes now were deserted and piled high with mournful heaps of dirty snow. The dripping of snow water from the eaves into a tin tub below, a quick and monotonous beating, became in the morning stillness the ticking of some impatient clock. On the floor

above, entirely vacated by students home for their vacation, every move of a listless broom across the carpet could be heard. There was, too, the heavy sound of the breathing of Kiril Kuldaroff, the roommate of Thian Kit Lin, who, after tearing up his invitation, had sprawled himself across the counterpane in surly sleep.

Thian Kit Lin tapped his knees with his fantastic fingers and watched through the window the melting and dripping world without. The invitation to an American Christmas dinner had not come unexpectedly to Thian Kit Lin.

He had, indeed, read the first tidings of it some ten days before in the student daily newspaper. F. Blair Golden, the editor, had penned an editorial:

Now, let's all get behind this and push—push hard. Push what? Why, the inviting of every one of our 316 foreign students to an honest-to-goodness American Christmas dinner!

No one knows the cheer that this may bring to some lonesome student from across the water, thousands of miles from his own home and family. These fellow students will be the one-hundred-per-cent Americans of the future. Now let's all get together, those of us who have homes in the city, and show our fellow students from foreign countries some real Yuletide hospitality.

In a box heading it was announced in bold-faced type that "special invitation blanks could be secured" at the student newspaper office.

Thus it was that the invitation to an American Christmas dinner came as no surprise to Thian Kit Lin, the pagan from Bangkok.

## II

By Christmas day the last traces of



the snow, dirtiest of all, were melting under a hazy sun which dropped into the west as if weighted with blood, leaving behind it a pale stillness and a damp chill. In the dim room sat Thian Kit Lin, a volume of his poet Li Po enclosed by his pointed fingers and his eyes fixed on the dusk. He was already dressed for dinner.

He put on his overcoat, a loose ulster that he had bought in Paris while attending the Sarbonne for a year, silently closed the door behind him and went down the stairs. Out on the sidewalk he made his way through the early darkness with a gait which can only be described as steadfast, a gait in which his arms and shoulders played no part.

As he rang the bell at the door of 637 West Plum Street, and as a sudden porch light shot him into urbane incandescence, he caught a glimpse of a bay window, a shadowy fern brushing it and a pink-shaded floor lamp. Then the door was opened.

"Why, good evening, Mr. —," Mrs. James R. Elkins hesitated for a second. "—I was just sure that you were—"

"Mr. Thian Kit Lin."

"Yes, Mr. Lin. We're awfully glad that you can be with us."

Thian Kit Lin bowed. It was a bow that was slow and sweeping, a bow that was twelve centuries older than automobiles and the telegraph. His smile contained at once the meaningless sweetness of a child's and the hopeless senility of old age. It was—but how can a smile be at one time bold and shy, wooden and naïve? But such was the smile of Thian Kit Lin.

"I am, Madam," he said, "privileged to be your guest."

Mrs. James R. Elkins had never been called "Madam" except by salesmen and in the form letters occasionally left in the mailbox. Not even then had the term been accompanied by such mellow suavity. His English was, like his smile, too perfect and it gave the impression of an accent.

"Just come right in," she said, and opened the door wider in invitation.

"That's right; let me take your hat and things. . . . Please take this chair while I call Mr. Elkins. . . . Mr. Elkins, this is Mr. Lin, who is taking dinner with us this evening. Now if you'll excuse me I must go out for a moment and see about the table. Dinner will be ready in just a second."

Ten minutes later the four of them were seated about the round dining-room table. At the head was James R. Elkins, with poised carving knife and fork, napkin tucked in his vest; portly, ruddy of face and nearly gray of hair. On one side was Eileen Elkins, a sophomore in the State University, a plain, shell-rim-spectacled girl of twenty. Mrs. James R. Elkins, on the other side, majestically stiff and a bit stout in her correct and marcelled coiffure. At the foot of the table sat Thian Kit Lin, his round, smooth face shining yellow and black in the lamplight.

The gleaming tablecloth was starched and showed the creases of careful ironing. The silverware was a luxurious frosted gray and the food steamed high. About the panelled dining-room, softly lit by crimson candles on the buffet, were pictures: one of a platter heaped high with fruit, another of several hundred delegates to a convention.

"The dark meat, did you say?" The voice of James R. Elkins expressed almost reverence for the roast chicken he was carving. "Yes, sir, just help yourself to the bread. . . . Now China's always been a mighty interesting proposition to me. . . . Cranberries? . . . Well, there's firecrackers and a lot of things you folks over there had a long time before we ever heard of them. . . . Now if you'll just pass your plate up, please."

There was silence for a moment broken only by the clicking of the silverware on the dishes. Mrs. James R. Elkins sat stiffly poised, bringing her knife up slowly and replacing it by the side of her plate. Thian Kit Lin used his fork with an ambidextrous, bird-like quickness and his head may have been bent a trifle too low over the table.

"I think it is a splendid opportunity,"



said Mrs. James R. Elkins, "that so many of our young people have a chance to attend University here. This country—"

"Let's see," interrupted James R. Elkins. "Oh, yes, I was reading just the other day in the *Times-Gazette* that there were about four hundred foreign students in the University here. A mighty good showing, it seems to me."

"There are many of us in America to be educated," said Thian Kit Lin, and his smile was answer to both of them.

"I was just telling Mrs. Elkins the other day that people were mistaken in thinking China was behind the times. Used to be a little, of course, but not a bit more than any other country. Look at the republic they're starting there now. And the way their young people come over here to get an education."

"The Japs, I guess, are a different proposition. The papers talk as if they might start war on us 'most any time. And it wouldn't surprise me if they gave us a mighty hard fight. There's so many of them and then it's their religion to want to die in battle. They figure that's a sure one-way ticket to heaven."

Mrs. James R. Elkins gave her mate a glance of reproof for his hearty laugh. She took up the conversation: "Our church has always helped to keep a missionary in—no, it was Korea. He writes back such interesting letters about the conditions there."

"Why, we have one of the letters, haven't we, Mamma?" asked Eileen.

"No, dear, don't you remember? I returned that to Mrs. Endridge."

Thian Kit Lin did not drink his tea with his meal but took it just before his dessert, in long, silent sips. He finished only a third of his mince pie.

After dinner he was seated by his host and hostesses in the parlor on a large, over-stuffed rocker of leather which nearly engulfed him. James R. Elkins was in the Windsor chair, the women on the divan.

"Well, Hazel," said James R. Elkins,

beaming complacently upon his wife, "I wonder if Mr. Lin wouldn't like to hear a little music?"

He rose heavily, aided by his pudgy hands upon his knees, the large imitation ruby ring on one of his fingers gleaming dully under the pink-fringed shade of the floor lamp. He cranked the phonograph with little well-fed grunts.

Thian Kit Lin appeared fragile in the huge leather rocker as he listened attentively to the Sextette from "Lucia" and "Humoresque." The next piece was a zestful melody in which negro dialogue was mingled with a song describing the delights of "sunny Tennessee."

"I'm so sorry," said Mrs. James R. Elkins, "that we don't have any Chinese music. We must look for some, Eileen, the next time we get records."

"Yes, sir, wonderful thing to have in the home, a phonograph," James R. Elkins added, musing.

The conversation lagged for a moment, then Mrs. James R. Elkins excused herself and went to the dining-room buffet to return carrying a knitting bag embroidered in beads with the bold design of a dragon. "Here's a little thing I wanted to show you, Mr. Lin. Elinore—excuse me—Mrs. Travis—that's my married daughter, you know, gave it to me. She got it in the Art Department up at Stern's one day—oh, yes, it was last October. Don't you think that Chinese needlework is wonderful?"

"It is," agreed Thian Kit Lin, "skillfully done."

"You can't always tell sometimes," James R. Elkins laughed long and heartily. "A lot of that stuff is made right up in Chicago in factories."

"But, Papa, anyone can see that this is genuine." Eileen Elkins was earnest.

"Yes," agreed Thian Kit Lin pacifically.

There was another long silence. Eileen Elkins saved it this time: "What studies are you taking at the University, Mr. Lin?"

Thian Kit Lin described his course in detail.



## III

It was Christmas night and the wreath of holly pinned to the scrim curtains loomed black in the pink lamp-light. The smoke from James R. Elkins' cigar flowed smoothly in a thin stream toward the lamp. The steam from the radiators escaped with a comfortable hiss and the leather rockers were deep and soft. The cozy room made the blackness outside seem more black and comfortless. James R. Elkins uncrossed his fat knees and rose with a politely luxurious grunt. His wife and daughter watched him as if a ceremony pended.

"Mrs. Elkins and I want you to take home a little souvenir of what has been a mighty pleasant evening to us, a mighty pleasant evening," he said with kindly awkwardness. "It doesn't amount to anything, but—"

Thian Kit Lin rose. He stood very still and took from James R. Elkins a package tied with green ribbon embossed in miniature Christmas trees. His pointed fingers undid the wrapping and revealed a book bound in green morocco with a title in gold and old English, "The Man Who Wins."

"It's by Alfred M. Reeves," Eileen put in.

"You read poetry, of course?" asked Mrs. James R. Elkins. "I am just sure you'll like it. I've found them so inspiring, those little things of Reeves'."

With his delicate smile poised blandly, Thian Kit Lin opened the book to the first gilt-edged page.

"May I?" He looked up with a bird-like glance.

"Oh, do read one of them aloud."

His chant was slow and monotonous and Oriental:

*Have you ever paused and wondered  
In the grayness of the gloom—  
Have you ever sat and pondered  
While the gloaming sought your room?  
Have you ever faced yourself and said:  
"This life must have a key,  
The lock will turn for someone,  
And it must be me"?*

*Have you ever cowered, dreaming  
Of your past and future days,  
While the twilight glowered, gleaming  
Starry-eyed through purple haze?  
And did inspiration whisper then  
Amid life's petty dins:  
"Here's the secret—it's the fellow  
With the smile that wins"?*

*O it isn't to the heroes with their bold  
and shining swords;  
It isn't to the golden-tongued who sway  
the list'ing hordes,  
And it isn't to the captains of the lash-  
ing, crashing seas,  
Nor the adamant adventurers who  
storm life's frowning leas  
That the door of life is opened  
In this world of sighs and sins—  
It's the fellow with the smile that wins!*

Silently, tenderly, the exotic fingers of Thian Kit Lin replaced the book in the case and caressingly tied the package with its holiday ribbon. In the touch of those fingers and in his smile there was a deference and appreciation that made his murmured words seem almost unnecessary.

"I am deeply touched," said Thian Kit Lin.

James R. Elkins' eyes were blue and kindly. Eileen Elkins' smile was thrilled. And over the features of Mrs. James Elkins there came a look that might have been translated: "There is no Christmas in China. At least, not in those parts of China where the missionaries have not yet penetrated. There is no holly there, no poetry, no gifts."

## IV

THE front door had closed behind Thian Kit Lin. As he faced the night there was still in his ears the kindness of the parting greetings. He hurried quietly down the front porch steps, the parcel under his arm. Once he looked back at the bay window with its pink reading lamp and holly wreath and fern, then went on in his steadfast walk.

He stopped two blocks away, only for a moment. His shining smile was



gone. He was chanting in a whisper  
 . . . it was from Li Po:

*"What is the use of talking! There is  
 no end to talking—  
 There is no end to things in the heart."*

The dampness of the paved street  
 was already crinkled by the cold, but in  
 the gutter was a stream of muddy water  
 from the snows of the last week. His

smile again childlike and delicate, his  
 face dimly yellow and black in the  
 swaying light of a street lamp, Thian  
 Kit Lin leaned over the curb and ten-  
 derly, gently placed his present of the  
 evening in the turbid waters of the  
 gutter.

He stood for a moment still smiling,  
 as he watched it float away into the  
 darkness.



## Reminiscence

*By Jay Jarrod*

I SAW her last night in a restaurant.

Her ancient companion puffed a Russian cigarette and stroked his beard  
 reflectively.

He had apparently been generous to her, for she gleamed with pearls and  
 sapphires and her wraps were of chinchilla.

She smiled radiantly when she saw me but immediately after became  
 morose.

Was she thinking of those rosy evenings we once wasted together?

Or did she realize that the hazel-eyed girl at my side was her double of  
 ten years ago?



WITH respect to women, friendship is a case of stop, love a case of look,  
 and marriage a case of listen.



A WOMAN is beginning to get old when she imagines she is beginning to  
 look young.



NEIGHBORS—the people who wonder who started the fight.





# Requiescat

*By Yardley Dane*

MRS. COLE sat on the balcony of the apartment peering through filmed eyes over the city, while behind her in the living-room her daughter and son-in-law played checkers.

The warm trade wind brushed her cheek pleasantly. She knew that she was dying.

She sat there very quiet, afraid that at any moment Jack or Dora might come running out, find out what was the matter, and hurry her inside. A feeble shiver ran through her old body as she anticipated being put to bed; the telephoning, the solemn faces, Jack on one side, Dora on the other, holding her hands until she had passed away.

In a dark house, alone, she would have been afraid to die. She would have been tempted to scream, to struggle, and to tear loose the thin white hair that she did up so carefully every morning.

But here, poised above the many lights of the city, yet conscious of the open windows behind her, of the light that streamed through them upon her back, and of Jack and Dora sitting there at their game, she felt no fear. It was not as though she were being pushed out into the night, and heard a door slam behind her. That would have sent her into a panic. The balcony was like a waiting-room where she was getting her breath a minute before commencing her journey.

As no one came to disturb her a faint sigh of relief escaped her lips. She was going to die in perfect peace; alone with her thoughts, but close to her loved ones.

Her hands trembled in her lap. She tried to raise one of them to her face. When the effort proved too great for her falling energies she was content to let it rest there. Slowly her fingers moved to the arms of the chair and clung there, while her head leaned heavily against the back. It was the moment to compose her thoughts for Death, so she closed her eyes.

But, as she could think of nothing, she opened them again and looked out over the dark city.

Far away were the bay cities. She was not certain, but she thought that she could see them. Her vision crept nearer, crossing the harbor. Now she was looking at Chinatown and the Barbary Coast. And suddenly she was troubled by strange thoughts.

She had not foreseen that she would die with her eyes fixed upon wickedness. A shiver ran through her body. Was it safe to die like this, overlooking the district of the damned, or had she better call to Dora that she might be taken inside and laid upon her bed? But in that case she would probably die staring at the ceiling. The thought of herself lying there on her back with the ceiling a few feet above her head suffocated her.

She tried desperately to compose her thoughts—to think of flowers and birds and little children playing in the long summer grass. But she could think only of the damned.

The damned—down there in the Tenderloin crawling among their alleys along the hillside; terrible men and women squatting in pits of sin—she shuddered. But she knew there was



no use going inside now, that it was too late; that inside or out, these thoughts would possess her until she died.

She felt very conspicuous, as though alone at a casement hung high over the world—alone, utterly alone—an old, frightened woman deserted by her soul and left to die. As she shrank together, her hands moving to her lap again, clasping one another, the panorama before her eyes seemed to approach the balcony as though pushed forward and upward by some gigantic hand that was holding it for her inspection. A new hierarchy had formed upon the chiaro-scuro of streets and buildings, and for a moment the transformation made her dizzy. Then she saw that the moon was shining.

Peace came to her as she looked at the sky. She would never look down again, but would die with face upturned to the moon and stars; more beautiful, so much more beautiful and pure than the terrible city. Thus she would die: her children in the room behind her; the city remote at her feet.

Slowly the rapture faded from her eyes, and fear entered them again. The sky was changing. She sat immobile and rigid beneath the transvaluation. The moon had become a round, staring eye surrounded by countless small glittering ones. She trembled at the thought that a second moon was about to come rising above the housetops to place itself by the one she was looking at. Then there would be a pair. She cast quick, furtive glances from the corners of her eyes, knowing that if that happened she would scream.

Her head fell forward. It was easier to look down at the damned than up into that staring silence.

Now she was restless with a queer yearning. It seemed incomprehensible to her that she had wished to die looking at the sky, for what was there there for her? While here, down here. . . .

She smelt strange odors, and saw strange faces. She saw great ships sailing into the sun, and men who swaggered like gods in narrow streets, staring with fierce, lustful eyes at beautiful

naked women. And she yearned to be among them, young, beautiful and bold.

The voices of Jack and Dora, talking at their game, entered her fancy as the voices of these people.

"Move!" ordered one of the voices. The other voice spoke of kings.

Mrs. Cole tried to rise from her chair. She must go down to these people, who were her people and from whom she had been exiled for so many years. She must move—forward—down.

With a great effort she remembered she was dying, and that these were dreams—terrible thoughts. She tried again to compose her thoughts; to die as a good woman should. But the yearning would not be stilled, troubling her throat with long, tremulous sighs, and straining her eyes toward the streets of the damned.

Again she attempted to rise. The helplessness of her limbs infuriated her, for never, it seemed to her, had life stirred her as it did at this moment. She felt disgusted and ashamed of her worn-out body.

Now, when she was about to die, it seemed to her that for the first time she really understood herself. She was not a sweet, kindly old woman; nor had she ever been an innocent little child. She was something more elemental and terrible; a primordial creature of strange needs like the damned down there into whom had been instilled at birth the poison of spleen and longing. Only this difference there was: that instead of driving boldly on with her unaccountable desires like a god, she had crept along in their wake, casting furtive glances that she might not be detected in her sin.

A rich phantasmagoria of the ages marched before her eyes. She saw strong men and beautiful women dancing madly over the earth, then—*old, old people tottering about in the moonlight.*

For the last time she tried vainly to compose her thoughts for death.

The past swarmed from her memory. She had lived here on the hill for fifteen years. Before that she had lived in



Oakland, where Dora had been born, while John was working at the Richmond refinery. John had gone to China for the oil company, and had died there of fever. . . . Why had she not gone there with him instead of waiting? . . . Why had she never gone anywhere? . . . Why had she passed so many long, weary years in one place when the whole wide world was hers to wander in? . . . Why, with the wisdom of centuries to instruct her, had she missed the primitive happiness? . . .

It was quite plain to her now that she had missed it. Yes, that was quite plain. But why had it not been plain to her before? Her eyes burned. Why?

Dimly, a thundering in her ears, she understood. It was just this wisdom of the centuries that had bewildered her. A fierce desire seized her to be able to start life again, alone, the first woman. . . . Oh, if she could only be the first woman, living frankly and fearlessly here on this earth that was so far more beautiful than any heaven could ever be!

Suddenly she remembered a strange sad story about a beautiful garden at the end of the world where a man and a woman walked naked and were not ashamed; a garden somewhere eastward in Eden where grew all trees pleasant to the sight and good for food; the tree of Life also in the midst of the

garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Her hands crept to her face; her face bowed to meet them. She knew that she could never have escaped from the burden of this story, that she could not have lived otherwise. She had been damned one way, these people down there another. Now she understood that all this was not a case of sin and wickedness, but merely one of relative misery.

She wanted to know only one thing before she died—the reason. What vast benevolence profited by this confusion? There must be a reason why she was dying, and in a few months Dora's first baby would be born.

It was because she did not know the reason that she could not compose her thoughts for death. She must know—must!

Surely now, at the last moment, a voice would speak to her from Heaven so that she could die in peace.

Uncovering her face, she leaned forward to hear the truth. The reason! And suddenly she heard the voice, strong, satisfied and triumphant:

*"My game!"*

A man came out onto the balcony, stretching his arms in the moonlight. He bent down, then straightened up slowly to go inside and tell his wife that her mother was dead.



**G**IVE a pessimist a little money and he becomes an optimist. Give him a whole lot and he becomes a cynic.



**P**EDESTRIAN—a man who reaches either his destination or the morgue.





# Mrs. Crocker and Gertie Folwell

*By Marion Sturges-Jones*

## I

**A**N overwhelming spasm of hatred possessed Mrs. Crocker as she watched Gertie Folwell's retreating figure until it disappeared around the bend that led to the boat-landings. The very walk of the girl was repellent to her; she swung her large, lithe body with an insolent grace that shocked the sensibilities of the older woman. A childless widow of over sixty, Mrs. Crocker had never outgrown an inherent virginity of mind and a dislike of that peculiarly abundant ripeness that certain full-blooded women suggest. There was something not quite nice about it. . . .

Gertie's mother sat on the other end of the porch, lost already in senile mists of nebulous imaginings. Indolently obese, nothing could awaken in Mrs. Folwell more than a momentary interest except such things as pertained to her own comfort. There was no breeze from the Sound today; the heavy noon-day sun sent yellow clouds of heat sweeping over the little town. It baked insistently on the roofs, and flashed with sullen intensity on the lead-blue of the water lying dormant beyond the dock. It was a heat to which Essington was little accustomed, and which it bore with a small amount of fortitude.

"I'm losing my God," thought Mrs. Crocker to herself fearfully, amazed at the length to which her aversion to Gertie was carrying her. "I never remember hating anyone in my life before. It must be my fault as much as hers. They're going to be here for nearly two months more; I've got to put up with them, that's all."

She put down her knitting, wiped her moist hands on the starched gingham apron that enveloped her, and glanced at Mrs. Folwell with a searching, minute look, as if striving to find in her some quality compatible with her own New England temperament.

The old lady, feeling Mrs. Crocker's stare, raised her eyes and smiled.

"Warm, isn't it?" she said with an effort. "My goodness, it's almost as hot as New York. . . ."

She raised a pudgy hand and wiped her red, perspiring face laboriously. "Think I'll go upstairs and lie down awhile—No, guess I won't either; I'll wait 'til after dinner. Where did Gertie say she was going?" The habitual expression of repressed interrogation returned to Mrs. Folwell's face.

"She didn't say," replied Mrs. Crocker coldly. "She went toward the boat-landing."

"Oh." Mrs. Folwell seemed to lose interest in the conversation. She fixed her gaze with a sort of apathetic languor on the shining whiteness of the Essington Congregational Church, glimpsed between the motionless green foliage that intervened.

The church was being painted; Mrs. Crocker's heart gave a little thrill as each wall in its peeling drabness emerged from the brush a snowy expanse of purity. It was alone her joy in the reclamation of the church edifice that compensated for her deranged peace of mind since the Folwells had rented part of her house for the summer months.

There was no doubt that Mrs. Crocker had been actuated by the most altruistic motives in accepting the



Folwells. While she was far from wealthy, even as wealth is regarded in Essington, her income was sufficient for her needs; she had lived in the Crocker home since her marriage forty years before, and it would never ordinarily have occurred to her to upset the serene orderliness of her life. Her self-respect would, indeed, have suffered had strangers shared the house under any circumstances other than those that then governed.

It had all come about in the most natural fashion. The Rev. Mr. Barnes had appealed earnestly and eloquently for contributions toward restoring the church; it was sadly in need of shingling, painting and carpeting. Mrs. Crocker had been torn between her tremendous admiration for the Rev. Mr. Barnes and an instinctive shrinking from any change in her mode of living. Her income would not permit her to increase her weekly offering of two dollars; she must, therefore, decline to help the church in its pathetic need, or obtain the money through some other channel. Essington, which prided itself on its exclusiveness, contained no hotel or boarding-house, and, as the town was famed for its salutary climate, the demand for houses had long exceeded the supply. This year, thought Mrs. Crocker, she might swallow her pride, praying to the dear Lord for moral support, and accept the most lucrative offer that came, turning the money over to the Rev. Mr. Barnes for his good work.

She somewhat timidly communicated her plan to the minister, and found that by virtue of the added impetus of his hearty approbation, and the more definite and efficient force of his executive powers, it was all about to become an actuality.

Mrs. Crocker fluctuated between a family from Hartford who offered two hundred for the season and acknowledged four children all under fifteen, and the Folwells, two grown women, who named a hundred and fifty as their limit. It was certainly disconcerting; Mrs. Crocker had pledged herself to accept the highest offer, but she felt

that four young children were almost more than her ancient and dignified house could endure. She ended by presenting the matter to the Rev. Mr. Barnes and being soothed and delighted by his sagacious suggestion that she accept the Folwells' offer and contribute the extra fifty herself during the course of the year.

They had been a shock to Mrs. Crocker from the first glimpse. She had not, it is true, attempted to visualize what they might look like, but she was still totally unprepared for two such elephantine women,—Essington femininity ran more to gaunt, angular types; there was scarcely a really "fat woman" in town.

They had come from the station by taxi, arriving early one evening in the beginning of June. Mrs. Crocker, mistress of an immaculately housecleaned domain, smooth of hair and trim of print dress, had hastened to the street as she heard the engine stop.

"Miss Folwell—Mis' Folwell?" she called. "I'm right glad to see you—" and she advanced to clasp their hands as they got out of the car.

Gertie Folwell was in her late twenties; a tall, stout, violent looking creature, black of hair and eyes and a little too red of lips and cheeks,—that is, too red for Mrs. Crocker's taste. One might not admire her type, but it could not be denied that she was rather magnificent. She smiled benignly and crushed Mrs. Crocker's thin fingers in a soft, fleshy grip. The contact was disturbing; the poor lady wanted to run to the pump and wash away the sensation of warm, voluptuous oiliness that lingered. She turned eagerly to the mother.

"You must be tired after the long journey, Mis' Folwell," she said, her precise New England accent seeming a trifle more pronounced than usual.

It was as if some prognostic insight—some latent instinct of self-preservation—warned her of the necessity for emphasizing her individuality.

Mrs. Folwell was struggling to get out of the car. Her hat was tipped slightly over one ear, and wisps of



straight gray hair protruded at angles, giving her a comically rakish appearance. She was Irish; uncompromisingly, theatrically Irish; the exact picture of a parodied old Mother Machree, perfect in detail, from the bushy white eyebrows and florid complexion down to the funny little jog-trot with which she walked.

She laughed good-naturedly, and panted and puffed her way into the house. Her only acknowledgment of Mrs. Crocker's salutation had been the extension of a limp, fat hand. She did try to say something, but only succeeded in grunting inaudibly. She was like a fat, dissipated baby. Perhaps her eyes, as much as anything else, confirmed the impression of infantility; they were blue and held a wondering stare of incredulity and mysticism. Mrs. Crocker noticed this and thought to herself with a pardonable sensation of scorn that it would be no surprise if the old lady started to gurgle and blow frothy bubbles.

Strange, this feeling of revulsion almost on sight. Mrs. Crocker was a philanthropic woman; kind, charitable, humane. She had always made serious effort to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness, to love her neighbor as herself, and to turn the other cheek when she was persecuted. She disapproved of gossip, and slander, and allowed for the weaknesses in human nature. She was a good woman, in all that the acceptance of the term involved. But these Folwells—

"I feel as though something would happen with that girl around," she said to herself as she lay in bed the night they arrived, "something dramatic."

Mrs. Crocker had no fondness for things dramatic.

## II

MRS. CROCKER had been up several hours the next morning before Gertie or her mother awoke. She heard the old lady snoring resonantly as she passed her room, and the sound pleased her. Essington's famous tonic air was

reacting dutifully; everyone slept as though drugged for the first few days. Then they found themselves electrically energetic, fired with qualities of almost superhuman force. Whether it was a dynamic sort of vivifying from the astonishingly rare blue of the sky, or the effect of the salt wind that blew from the Sound, had never been scientifically decided. The natives were satisfied to say that it was in "the air," and summer visitors did not debate the question. It was well known that Essington was curiously unacquainted with physical laziness; the climate was more than it could survive.

It was after ten when Gertie and her mother came down. Mrs. Crocker had already entertained several of the church's ladies who dropped in for friendly morning chats, rather more eager and inquisitive than usual. She did not hold with people who hastily formed derogatory opinions, and had disclosed none of the juicy morsels of scandal that seemed, like bad temptations, to linger in her mind. She had, therefore, the pleasure of feeling that she had given the devil even more than his due.

She was engaged in shelling a bucket of early June peas when the girl appeared. Gertie, looking more gigantic in a starched gingham dress, envisaged the kitchen and its meticulous mistress in one sweeping glance.

"Good-morning," she said, with a fleeting smile that revealed a row of startlingly white teeth. Everything about her seemed overcharged; she affected Mrs. Crocker as would a vivid and vaguely discomposing painting. Gertie's mouth drooped again almost immediately, and her face resumed its expression of brooding bitterness. There had been no agreeable note of greeting in her voice; if anything, she seemed to grudge the necessity for speaking, and took no small pains to hide it. Mrs. Crocker felt that Gertie despised her; she sensed the force of a bitter, volcanic scorn.

"Mama'll be down in a minute," Gertie continued. "You said in your



letters that we could use the kitchen and dining-room—?"

"Yes, certainly," said Mrs. Crocker hastily. "I'll get my meals either before or after you do; I won't be in your way at all."

"You'd better eat with us," said Gertie. "Mama'd like to have you."

That seemed to settle it; being unable at the moment to find reasonable objection, and, half-reluctantly drawn by her very dislike, Mrs. Crocker accepted the inevitable.

### III

AGNOSTICS were new to Essington, and as strange as the aborigines to Mrs. Crocker. She did not approve of people who worshipped their God in stern and forbidding Thou-Shalt-Nots,—she preferred those who tried to follow him in a gentle, humble manner,—but at least she understood them. The Folwells disdained either form of belief. Mrs. Crocker had at first been apprehensive that she was harboring Roman Catholics, so she broached the subject of religion in a tactful way by relating the tale of her house-renting. Gertie had been frankly unimpressed and indifferent.

"Oh, you're a Congregationalist, are you?" she said. "We used to be Catholics. Mama's people, who are Irish, all are, but you might just as well know now that we don't go to any church, or believe in any God, or Heaven, or any stuff like that. Papa's in the stevedoring business, and religious blather doesn't last long around the wharves. Lot of hypocrites, church people, to my way of thinking. They make me sick. Pass the apple-sauce, mama."

Mrs. Crocker shivered, and turned from her dinner with a feeling of nausea. Gertie's full, sensual lips and dark, turbulent eyes, combined with a disbelief in God, culminated in a paganism that seemed to her outrageous.

It was, because of this, all the more perplexing to Mrs. Crocker to realize with what vehement ferocity Gertie regarded feminine virtue. There was no

denying the obvious sincerity of her allegiance to chastity, nor the predatory war she waged against those who, by word, thought or deed, placed themselves beyond the pale. She believed in two classes of women: good women and prostitutes. When one ceased to belong in the first class,—and habitual flirtations were enough to cause that,—one went automatically into the latter. There was something frightening about Gertie's oratory when she was roused on a subject such as this; Mrs. Crocker was reminded of the passionate intolerance of the Lutheran ecclesiastics. Yet, unhallowed by the grace and mellowness of the church, Gertie's respectability seemed even more formidable.

Mrs. Crocker wondered how the Rev. Mr. Barnes would cope with her; she almost regretted that the girl professed various physical indispositions whenever the minister called.

Gertie was, in addition, an exemplary daughter. She took care of her mother with a greedy attachment; every wish of the old lady was anticipated, every comfort supplied. She would have resented any infringement on her duty; she guarded it almost as jealously as her virtue. But there was something almost offensive in her devotion; she was too elemental; the primal emotion was stark, exposed, indecent.

It seemed incredible that such conflicting characteristics should dwell within one person; when atheism rubbed elbows with daughterly devotion, and a carnal exterior covered a belligerently unsullied maidenhood, things became too complex for Mrs. Crocker.

"She ought to be married," thought the good lady with a flash of insight, and then blushed that she could entertain so indelicate a thought.

\* \* \*

Meanwhile, Gertie Folwell, half-conscious of the disturbing influence she was exerting on her hostess, and not a little contemptuously amused, continued her leisurely walk down the deserted street. It was twelve o'clock, and dinner-time in Essington; savory smells



of cooking issued from the little houses that seemed to hover, suspended, atop the narrow and crooked sidewalk.

Gertie could see into and through most of the cottages; there was a transparency about them that coincided with the openness in the lives of their owners. It pleased her to think that a surprised little murmur would arise as she was recognized; to be walking in such heat was unheard of, and to do so at dinner-time was a still greater wonder to the town. Gertie liked to shock people; being, by her own insensitiveness, almost impervious, this was to her a substitute form of excitement.

Reaching the end of the street, she hesitated. Obviously the most comfortable place was in the house; a breeze would probably spring up by evening, and then a walk to the Sound would be both pleasant and profitable. The very water in its present placidity seemed to give forth steam; there was nothing cooling in approaching it. Still—she found herself searching for reasons for not returning. She gave a cursory glance backward, pictured Mrs. Crocker's compressed lips and air of restrained disapproval, and plunged with a lazy, throaty laugh down the unpaved road that led to the wharves. Mrs. Crocker was the sort who always did the right, the appropriate thing; it was rather fun to take a walk in the heat just because one felt like it. . . .

The boat-landing, like the street, was empty and abandoned. It jutted out, a drab little expanse of worn, gray logs, old and exposed and resigned. The tide was low, and the motor-boats at anchor seemed sunk depths below the surface of the world. They floated there, very still and very deserted, waiting. An odor of fish rose and filled the air with its penetrating acidity.

"What a smell!" said Gertie aloud, curling her lip derisively and turning away.

"Hello, girlie!" cried a voice unexpectedly; a harsh masculine voice of tremendous force. "What's a'matta? Do my little fish offend?"

Annoyed, Gertie made no reply, and

had reached the end of the wharf, determined now to return home, when the voice again arrested her attention.

"Aww, don't go—we're just beginnin' to get acquainted!"

With an unpleasant sensation that, unknown, she had been observed, she turned and saw the head and shoulders of a man extended above the ladder that led to the motorboats below. He sprang up with a quick, facile sort of grace, and stood looking at her with a malevolently friendly grin. He might have been thirty; a towering hulk of man, with enormous, brawny arms, baked, like his face, to a deep red-brown. His hair had once been yellow, but was burned by the sun to a scorched orange shade, and stood out on his head like a towed aura of sunset. His eyes were blue; mere slits, in the weather-beaten ruggedness of his face, which narrowed and widened curiously as he talked. There was about him a suggestion of ravage, of stormy lawlessness, of utter lack of discipline. He wore dirty blue overalls, and a faded olive-drab shirt devoid of sleeves and collar, and his enormous feet were cased in a pair of dirty old sneakers. One great brown toe protruded carelessly; he wiggled it engagingly as he stood there.

"I don't happen to know you," said Gertie shortly, "and I can't say that you attract me."

She glanced with sudden fastidiousness at the crispness of her dimity dress.

"Well, for God's sake—" he began, and stopping, spat deliberately over the edge of the wharf, "as it happens, though you *do* attract me. Say, it's hell's age since I've seen a life-sized woman around these parts. Most of them are half editions of the real thing. I get tired of makin' up to a girl who only comes to my waist—!"

Gertie laughed—the first real laugh, she realized, since she had come to Essington. This man reminded her of some of the stevedores she had known in her childhood when she played around the wharves. She felt that they had something in common.



"I *thought* you was a regular gal," he said, taking a step toward her.

She looked up at him,—and a novel sensation it was to Gertie to find herself surpassed in height by any man,—and then moved away.

"Bah—you look awful," she said, lowering her brows and screwing her face into a contortion of disgust.

"Well—," he hesitated, "you wait until I get some other clo'es on, and get rid of the smell of these fish. Maybe you'll like me then, eh?"

Gertie developed an instantaneous and overpowering sense of panic.

"You keep away from me," she shouted, "I don't want to have anything to do with you! How dare you talk to me this way?"

He whistled.

"Oho!" he taunted. "Dry up on the shrinkin' vi'let stuff; you're too old!"

An ungovernable surge of fury seized the girl. She crimsoned; her eyes blackened dangerously, and she gave him a glance of demolishing rage. He spread his legs, and, sticking his huge hands in his pockets, surveyed her with a nonchalant air. The grin stuck to his coarse, leering face.

"I suppose you think you're fascinating me!" she cried, her voice trembling with an anger that was close to tears.

He made no answer, but stood still, slightly swaying with suppressed mirth.

She turned and fled.

"Aw revoor!" she heard him call after her. "I'll come and set with you a while this evenin', Gert." He enjoyed the start of surprise with which her retreating figure greeted his use of her name. "I'm Fred Lipsey, Gert. Ask Mis' Crocker; *she'll* tell you all about me—!"

#### IV

A CHANGE had come over Mrs. Crocker; even the neighbors noticed it. She went about the house with thin, set lips. The numerous little things that she formerly did with a pleasurable sense of duty became automatic,—tasks

which were performed with a mechanical precision.

She was plucking a chicken one morning, and staring with cold, unseeing eyes through the honeysuckle vine that clambered with persistent fragrance over the sunny expanse of the kitchen window.

Although it was after nine o'clock neither Gertie nor her mother were yet down. The two remained 'curiously impervious to the climatic conditions that usually restlessly energized the residents of Essington. They had never awakened from the stagnant laziness that they had displayed during the first few days of their arrival.

A step sounded on the gravel path; a heavy, resounding step that failed, in spite of its reverberating reiteration, to penetrate the profundity of Mrs. Crocker's thoughts. It was not until a powerful hand had torn aside the curtain of vines that her attention was aroused. She started nervously and saw Fred Lipsey's great, scarred head projected without ceremony into the kitchen,—a blot against its immaculate cleanliness.

He looked embarrassed, as startled almost as she; for a moment his narrow eyes held hers with a wavering fixity. It was as if he had caught a glimpse in the woman's face of an emotion that fascinated, yet baffled him. Muttering an apology, he withdrew himself awkwardly from the kitchen window. When, a second later, he came in through the door, he had regained in a measure the swagger of ease with which he had first greeted Gertie on the wharf a fortnight ago.

"Mornin', Mis' Crocker," he said, "didn't expect to find nobody around—that is, didn't expect to find *you* around—," he laughed, a note of confusion robbing his tone of any intended humor, "wouldn't of come stickin' my head in your window if I'd thought you was here—"

"You need not apologize," said Mrs. Crocker acidly. "You and your ways are well enough known to this town by now. If you refrain from entering



houses by the windows at night we can be thankful . . . What do you want?"

Lipseys face darkened, and the lines furrowing his skin settled like deep incisions. It was remarkable with what ease he conquered the anger that possessed him; in a flash he seemed completely to ignore the frank insult.

"Why, Mis' Crocker," he said wheedlingly, "You never used to be so mean. My mother and you was right friendly, —you ain't got nothin' against me, you know you ain't." He paused a moment. "I came to see Gertie. Right nice girl, ain't she?"

"Miss Folwell is not up yet." Mrs. Crocker spoke the words with difficulty.

He laughed again, more naturally this time.

"Pretty damn soft for her, ain't it? Well, I must be goin'. Just tell Gertie to be down at the dock at eight this evenin', and I'll take her for a trip in my million dollar yacht!"

He fingered the handle of the screen door thoughtfully.

"She's reformin' me, you know," he added slowly, watching Mrs. Crocker as he spoke. "Well, good-bye—don't forget my message."

He slammed the door and was gone.

Mrs. Crocker heard him humming a tune as he repassed the kitchen window; it was a jazzy, unmusical popular melody to which his vigorous voice did full justice. The sound floated through the honeysuckle vine and filled the air with a sensuous potency.

White and shaken, Mrs. Crocker resumed her work. Her fingers fumbled clumsily, however, and she was still engaged in plucking the chicken when Gertie came into the kitchen.

"Good morning," said the girl brightly.

Since Mrs. Crocker made no reply, she gave her an amused glance as she busied herself with preparations for breakfast. It entertained Gertie to goad Mrs. Crocker into a pregnant silence; she thought her a poor, mean creature not to fight aggressively for her rights; Christian docility was a pitiful thing.

Gertie felt in a good humor. She

stood by the kitchen door a moment and spread her arms, luxuriously drinking in the scent of the country. There was a lingering smile on her lips as she turned back to the stove; her plump white arm curved richly, yet its pliant grace sickened Mrs. Crocker anew.

"I'd be friendly with Gertie Folwell if she'd let me," she said to herself, as if propitiating an inward accusatory voice, "but she's so self-sufficient . . ."

"Fred Lipsey was here a few moments ago," she said aloud in sharp, bladelike tones. "He asked me to tell you to meet him at eight o'clock tonight at the dock."

"Oh." Gertie stood still for a poignant second. "Thanks," she added as she slammed the dining-room door behind her.

## V

At ten o'clock that night Mrs. Crocker was glad to agree to Mrs. Folwell's proposal that they go to bed. The two ladies had spent a depressing evening together, both striving gallantly to keep up a desultory conversation that withered, still-born, in spite of them. Mrs. Crocker led the way upstairs, holding high a tall oil lamp. The trimness of her prim figure contrasted oddly with that of the fat old lady, who leaned with such tremendous force on the balustrade that it creaked and groaned in agony with the pressure of each step. No allusion was made to Gertie's absence until they reached the top. Then:

"Oh—did you leave the door open for Gertie?" asked Mrs. Folwell, a wheeze in every breath.

"Yes," said Mrs. Crocker succinctly.

Placing the lamp in Mrs. Folwell's room, she smiled with a semblance of tortured friendliness, exchanged banal wishes for a good night's rest, and went to her room in the front of the house.

The night was still and warm; a light rain began to fall; sleep came to Mrs. Crocker with difficulty. She lay and stared through the open window at the hazy opal moon floating through the



overhanging sky. She did not remember ceasing to see that particular patch of night; it seemed that she merely opened her eyes wider and returned to a more alert consciousness when the sound of voices from below reached her. She found that in reality she had slept; jumping to her feet she saw that the chased Orinolu clock on her bureau proclaimed the hour nearly one. For a moment she thought of closing the window, so intense was her aversion toward hearing the conversation between Gertie and Fred Lipsey. Then her own name reached her, and, frankly and fiercely interested, she crouched on the floor beside the window.

"You're a brute—an inhuman beast!"

Mrs. Crocker realized with amazement the appealing emotion with which Gertie spoke. It was obvious that she was pleading with him; the listening woman felt a twinge of vicarious shame.

"Don't be a damn fool!" came in heavy tones from Lipsey. "Love 'em and leave 'em; that's me. You make me sick when you get weepy. Don't you suppose I get enough of that sob stuff at home?"

The girl burst forth in an outraged tone. "Oh . . . to think that I ever had anything to do with you! I could die of shame. I never knew you were married; no, you took good care that I didn't . . .!" She spoke with an odd mixture of fury and tenderness.

His voice became softer and more malignant.

"Ba-a-ah!" he ejected. "Mis' Crocker knew, of course; everybody in Essington knows me. Guess you and the old lady don't hit it off very well . . . eh?"

There was silence for a moment.

"Oh!" she cried. "Mrs. Crocker knew, and she never told me! How could she? The miserable old fiend! That's your church woman . . ."

Her voice trailed into a sob; even the cruelty of Mrs. Crocker could not keep her thought away from her own unhappiness for long. Strained in the darkness, the older woman sat tense and rigid.

"Cut it," said Lipsey roughly. "I'm goin'. It's after twelve, and I ain't been home any night this week—as well you know. The wife'll be raisin' hell pretty quick." He yawned. "Well, it's good-bye this time. I'm goin' fishin' for a spell on the river—guess I won't see you no more."

"Fred!" Her voice rose shrill and panic-stricken from the blackness below. "Fred! You *can't* go! Don't you realize? You simply can't! You—oh, my God, I don't care whether you marry me or not—don't go away! Listen, Fred, maybe you could get divorced—father's got quite a lot of money. You can't leave me like this—what'll I do? I can't bear it! You don't know, Fred, you don't know what it'll be. . . ."

The words dripped frantically from her lips in an unpremeditated, jumbled flow.

He yawned again; then Mrs. Crocker could fancy him turning on her with a quick, feline movement.

"Yeah!" he cried, "that's your church woman! Good, kind old soul, Mis' Crocker, ain't she? Listen: I hate that old harpy! She used to come mealy-mouthin' around my mother and tryin' to make me go to Sunday-School and stop smokin' when I was a kid . . . now she's always sendin' old clo'es to my wife, and slobberin' sympathy all over her. . . . Dirty, rotten charity rags!" he swore. "I burn 'em up . . .!"

Gertie made no answer; it was improbable that so remote an outburst penetrated the armor of her misery. Lipsey seemed impatient; Mrs. Crocker could hear him stamping the soft ground like a restless animal. There was a murmur, low and enticing, from Gertie, and a sudden rustling of the leaves on the vine that grew around the porch. Mrs. Crocker trembled; surely she was not struggling with him! Lipsey's voice, a harsh, raucous outburst, hurled close to Gertie's ear, was wafted unintelligibly to her like the menacing of distant thunder. With the sensation of endeavoring, in a futile, blundering way, to ward off the consciousness of



disaster, Mrs. Crocker closed the window and crept back into bed.

Not many minutes later she heard Gertie, stumbling and heavy, coming up the stairs. Mrs. Crocker relaxed, and drew the first breath of which he was aware since her awakening, and, in the darkness, shrugged a deprecatory shoulder. It was all, she felt sure, a distasteful dream that could not conceivably be true . . . she fell into a deep sleep.

## VI

POUND—pound—pound. Something reached out and threatened the impregnable dark peace that enveloped Mrs. Crocker. Pound—pound—pound. She resisted the intrusion with prolonged strength and an awareness of a sort of sly cleverness. She felt herself nodding her head elfishly, one finger alongside her nose. Then the finger strayed, the sly cleverness melted intangibly away, and she awoke to find her room filled with thin morning sunshine. A bevy of voices came from the street; hushed, insistent, rather awed voices. Hastily clutching a kimona, she went downstairs, the tight feeling returning to her breast. She was very gray and austere in the dim morning light.

She saw first the Rev. Mr. Barnes, and behind him many vague, familiar figures. They crowded on the narrow porch and strayed into the street beyond; dark, clay-like automatons that ceased all motion when she opened the door.

"My dear friend," began the minister, "we have something very terrible to tell you." He mouthed the words with the delight of the instinctive orator. "The young lady who was staying

with you has met with an accident. She—she has been drowned."

He stepped aside with a fine sense of the drama of the situation, and Mrs. Crocker saw that the men behind him were carrying an improvised stretcher. It was heavy; they swayed with the weight of it. She advanced without hesitation, and lifted the sheet.

Standing quite motionless, Mrs. Crocker gazed beneath with a concentrated thoughtfulness. She was not stunned or hysterical; rather, she was filled with a vast, sweeping sense of freedom from emotion of any kind. Making no effort to be stoical, there was yet a calm directness in her gaze.

Yes; they were right; that distorted, water-soaked shape had once been Gertie Folwell . . . now it was merely an obese mass; a thing of white flesh and black seaweed hair; beautiful and obscene. . . .

For the first time Mrs. Crocker felt close to Gertie. Dead, she was hers; it gave the woman a sense of absolution to acknowledge freely her complicity in the girl's suicide. Twisting wrathfully, her New England conscience collapsed under the sway of the alien forces that possessed and ruled her.

"The fishermen found her body a short time ago," continued the minister. "She had apparently been dead but a few hours. An accident, I suppose?"

He looked at Mrs. Crocker interrogatively. The tenseness of her attitude made him slightly nervous. She did not seem to hear, and he turned to the assemblage with a tolerant, death-bed smile.

With a sense of prophetic fulfilment, Mrs. Crocker bent and pressed her thin lips passionately against Gertie's white forehead.





# The Nietzschean Follies

## VII

### Young Muckers

*By Thomas Beer*

#### I

THE silliest lie now in American circulation is the legend of discontented and frustrated youth. Youth was never so happy and so petted. We live for the assuagement of conceit. The core of satisfaction is parade. Then how can youth be wretched when an absolute anguish of glory is flung on its least and last motion? What rot! But hear Miss F. Jane Worthing:

"The youth of the upper classes has its solace in self-expression and association with the Arts. But the youth of what one must call the working class has no outlet for its protest against the industrial barbarism and artistic crassness of our civilization."

This worried me dreadfully until Miss Worthing resumed, a thousand words later:

"It is stunning to observe that the average adolescent of the less prosperous class has no interest whatever in self-analysis or social criticism. The young 'mucker' of both sexes devotes his and her leisure to cheap hedonism exclusively. It has always been so."

Exactly. The young mucker isn't hunting an outlet for his protest. Miss Worthing, aged twenty-four years, is stunned, but, unlike other investigators, is not so stunned that she forgets to tell the truth about what she sees. This is honor in criticism. And I like the word "mucker."

The word is a quarrel among special-

ists in slang. It had, once, something to do with the Anglo-American myth of fair play in sport. It has come to mean, more or less, an opportunist whose grammar is bad. The average adolescent of the American "working class" comes under the head in all reason because his grammar is bad, his ethics are accidents and his aesthetics are those current on his block. So he is an eyesore to social investigators and the only interesting animal in the American cage. Voiceless, vociferous; unseen, ubiquitous; the adored of orators and damned. Let us observe, with Miss Worthing, that he has no interest in self-analysis and social criticism. The brute is a hedonist.

As such, the mucker is the sole remaining depository of the pagan joy. He knows what he wants and goes after it in a genial and uncompromising fashion unknown to dabblers, unguessed in Greenwich Village. He wants exercise for all his capable muscles. He wants such foods and spectacles as a mind slack from days of physical exertion demands. His doctrine of the immediate good hangs on the proposition that the good be immediate rather than exquisite. He takes what he finds and his notice of defects is loud and prompt. He states his opinions in a husky baritone for all the world to hear and, perhaps, his lost illusions hurt rather less. They are not stored to be the hearts of pearls. He spills them and is done with it.

This is mannerless, healthy and inar-



tistic. It distresses the artist who must have ten minor illusions to compensate for his missing central illusion. The mucker has his major illusion—his belief that he is justified in his acts—and is therefore quite willing to send the rest to the gutter as nuisances. I include gentility among the arts. A man who practises adequate manners has lost his infantile belief in justice as embodied between his soles and his scalp and is, by the process, an artist, a dallier with illusions in detail. Thus it happens that Irishmen, Mississippi negroes and Spaniards can never qualify as muckers pure; they are concerned for their manners and lose the drift of their job.

But the mucker has no interest in attitudes, in subtle relations. He makes use of his area as he uses his body. He telephones to his bootlegger from the Y. M. C. A. booth. He infamously persuades the sister of his best friend with the knowledge that his intimate is technically obliged to shoot him and will find every technical excuse for shirking the task so long as they agree on tobacco and the chances of Mike The Wop knocking out Battling Bill Kinsellheimer under three rounds at the Erin Athletic Club. Cynicism has no meaning for him, because his cynicisms are rudimentary expressions of the truth, the ashlar of a philosophy. Asked to define "cynic" on military examination papers, he wrote, "A kind of stomach trouble" in all seriousness just as he wrote "A kind of Russian fancy dance" after "Soviet"—being in that definition of the same mind as American radical editors of smart weeklies.

This area—his poolroom, his sports club, his favorite block for nocturnal encounters—satisfies him by its exclusion of ideas. He has not the farmhand's suspicion of stray thoughts. They don't alarm. His curiosity is facile and fleet. The corn-planter, in the isolation of his patch, broods over the woes of men and develops awful theories, centering in himself. The mucker develops nothing, secure from reflection in his group. Thus great political fancies are floated from country stores, and what come out of gymnasiums but

dance steps, prizefighters and improvements in language? Who shall then say that his hedonism is useless?

His improvements of language are manifest. Muckerdom provides the corporeal stuff of the Marines and the Navy, the hatcheries of slang in our day. The dialects of the two services mingle, naturally, and the results rise through vaudeville to the drawing-room achieving whitewash as they pass. Let "parlor snake" be an example of honorable progress from the stews to the lips of virgins. There is an everlasting attempt to show that our slang is a vague and involved gesture toward art by the proletarian. Not at all. These allusions, evasions and compressions usually begin in obliquity, the mother of beauty. Word after word arises from a mire of raw obscenity and I notice that terms of any synthetic charm usually stay where they started. For instance, "fan-footer," a jewel almost unknown outside philologic circles. And yet how gently expressive of the gallantry girl's dilatory amble along the sunny pavement! Is it not better to say, "I seen Murphy all crumbed up with some pogie bait beamin' a stale egg in 3 A," than to remark tamely, "I saw Murphy in his best clothes with a box of candy making love to a married woman in Third Avenue."? Of course it is! And how much less offensive to the ear of priests and mothers at parish hops! . . . It should be admitted that pagan joy has its home-grown difficulties.

## II

AMONG the burghers and cerebrals there seems to be a meek impression of the mucker as a wistful identity, conscious of his limits and sorrowful for his sins. The impression is at least useful. It keeps the upper classes from investigating very thoroughly and it makes them happy. As an individual, the mucker is probably less vexed than any other being by a feeling that the Central Force has an eye on him. As an individual he is terribly unconscious of the cerebral. Persons in full contact with an environment tend to callousity and the environment prevents a proper



sense of limits. So one sees phrases of sympathy expended on Caliban, "the cynical education of the streets—voicelessness—" and the rest.

The phrases are wasted. He doesn't read. He isn't aware of the burning affection for him felt above stairs. Certain considerations move him to glance down the sporting pages of the press. A few magazines cater to his eye with animating covers. The circulation of dailies and weeklies vowed to the cause of labor is pathetic as against the stretch of brawn. Reading is merely a glossary on the subjects of his diversion. As a realist, he has no interest in the prim nonsense of realists, who are people horrified by him. As a cynic he has no interest in sentimental versions of himself. As a hedonist he has no interest in kisses that close instead of beginning the tale of love. This is all "hooey" and he is off it. Even cellulose fiction leaves him cool in the smoking gallery. The movies entertain him more as a scene of amatory adventure than anything else. His voicelessness leaves him when the bricklayer's son rolls out of bed in silk pajamas or when the mimes faking a prizefight are too inexperienced. He becomes vocal when his realism is flagrantly outraged. As for the cinema goddesses, they make him yawn. It is the hedged and inhibited child of middle-class folk who writes letters that bog down social secretaries in the blond forest of Los Angeles. The mucker wastes no stamps with Maggie and Reba waiting at the corner by the soda shop.

The films, indeed, have failed him. He liked the rough-and-tumble of the early days. He is loyal to one concept. He has a pedantry. He dotes on muscle. He understands swagger. The wily movie maker placates him with doses of this specific, now and then, at the risk of boring the bourgeoisie Mytilénienne who is the real paymistress of his game. She wants to see the promoted Sicilian bootblack press his lips on the quivering shoulder of Gloria Gamp and think of the consequences. The lad in the gallery waits hopefully to see John Reilly wallop the other horse-thief. It

occurs to a casual witness that his desire is hardly the worst of these twain. . . .

He is not interested in fiction and fiction returns the compliment almost too violently. Where and when has he been drawn? Dreiser showed him, briefly, in young Bass Berhart. Rupert Hughes has given him some kindly attention. He once appeared in full glory from the hand of Gouverneur Morris. Only in two lost and ignored volumes of Stephen Crane has anything really been made of him. In "Maggie" he is reduced for the sake of the girl's figure. But in "George's Mother" he is the whole show. There he is, taken on his own valuation, with ironic tenderness and without a sermon attached. And yet he is incomplete.

"I had to strike out four episodes," Crane told his friend Bassett Holmes, "or not have the book printed. As a Britisher, you probably do not understand that an American workingman has to be purer than Saint Mary the Egyptian or Tess of the D'Urbervilles. He can have a thirst and a bad temper but he. . . ."

Let the sentence dissolve in a trail of asterisks. It would take the silken dexterity of Ronald Firbank or Henri de Regnier to complete it inoffensively. It had best stay truncated with its subject.

But what a topic! He is spilled, in afternoons when whistles blow along the streets, in a multicolored flux, as if some monstrous hand squeezed a huge orange behind brick screens and the pips came bundling out. Trimly lounging on the curb of his clan's gathering place, clad for conquests, his amorous catholicity boils in the dusk. Ignored and not aware that he is ignored, certain of nothing but life, he remains our civilization's prime disgrace and its only man. Odd, but the sole great word of the war was slung by his representative, the resolute hedonist who equaled Cambronne. "Come on, unmentionables, d'you want to live forever?" It should be graven on bronze and thrust against the walls of every Young Men's Christian Association. . . .



# Meet the Wife

By Kenyon Nicholson

[A Comedy in One Act]

## CHARACTERS

RUBY LA MOTTE

BERT, her husband

DOLLY DOYLE, the other woman

SCENE: Room 345, Hotel Hildona, West 47th Street, New York.

TIME: 4 a. m.

*The Hotel Hildona, "the Home of Theatrical Folk," frankly caters to members of the profession. Its advertisement in the various trade papers, containing such alluring phrases as "Special Prices to Performers," "Rooms Clean and Airy" and "Low Rates and High Class," has made it particularly popular with vaudeville artists who desire to keep within running distance of the booking offices along Broadway. In the basement dining-room, where nightly a 65-cent six-course table d'hôte dinner is served to its guests—with the privilege of signing the check—it is nothing to see a lion-tamer sit down to a lamb stew, and an acrobat toying with a plate of corned beef and cabbage, and a song-and-dance team divide a porterhouse—all at the same table. Among many others, when in town, such sterling acts as Duffy and Keeler, "Mysterioso," the Three Flying Lordens, Philbrick's Animals and the Melody Boys always stop at the Hildona. Here one may hear the latest and snappiest gossip of the Rialto.*

*The setting of the play happens to be Room 345, the bedroom of BERT LA MOTTE and wife, of La Motte and La Motte, "That Nutty Pair." One senses a parlor and bath in the offing. It is a typical third-class hotel bedroom; brass twin beds, a bureau, two chairs, lace curtains and a musty-red carpet. In the middle of the room is a table upon which rest side by side a Gideon Bible and the latest number of Variety. The room is strewn about with clothes, which seem to have flowed from a wardrobe trunk standing in one corner. As the curtain rises, RUBY LA MOTTE is discovered covered up in bed sound asleep. The other bed is unoccupied. A night light wearing a dirty pink shade is the only illumination. . . .*

*Pretty soon there is the sound of a key being fitted into the outside door. By the fumbling an astute theatregoer might suspect that the bearer of the key is inebriated. As the door opens, the theatregoer's suspicions are confirmed. Enters BERT LA MOTTE. He is not intoxicated to the extent that he staggers, but he has reached the stage technically known as being lit up. BERT takes one look toward the bed; then whispers to someone behind him.*



BERT

S'all right! She's dead to the world. Come on!

*(There enters DOLLY DOYLE, a blonde creature who, from her paradise tips to her short-vamped pumps, is every inch an actress. She is not too old, and pretty in a rather obvious way.)*

DOLLY

Bert, this is fierce—this time o' night and all!

BERT

What's the odds? You ain't gettin' cold feet?

DOLLY

No, only—

BERT

*(Alcoholically confidential.)* Now listen to me, kid, we're doin' this on my say-so, and all I ask from you is just to keep mum. I'll do the talkin' for the both of us.

DOLLY

It's all wrong—you wouldn't be doin' this if you wasn't stewed.

BERT

*(Violently sarcastic.)* Oh, wouldn't I? I s'pose you think livin' with Ruby's a panic. We're friendly like a cat and dog!

*(Reassured, DOLLY crosses the room on tiptoe and looks at the sleeping RUBY.)*

DOLLY

*(Appraisingly.)* She ain't so hard to look at. . . . From what you said I thought she was a scarecrow.

BERT

Ruby'd never get no blue ribbon at a beauty show, but she's got her good points.

DOLLY

She's about my height, wouldn't you say?

BERT

About. . . .

DOLLY

Seems to me I've run acrost her on the same bill some place. She ever played Interstate time out of Chicago?

BERT

Has she! There ain't no time this side o' Frisco Ruby ain't played! She comes from a family o' troupers. Before she married me she was doin' a sister act with her aunt. They billed themselves as the Sisters Maynarde.

DOLLY

She looks sorta familiar all right. But then after a few years in this business everybody you meet looks familiar. . . .

*(RUBY stirs uneasily in her sleep.)*

BERT

*(Sotto voce.)* Shall I wake her up now—I wanta get this over with. . . .

DOLLY

*(Restraining him.)* Leave her lay quiet a while. I ain't so sure this is just the way to break the news.

BERT

Sure it's the way! Open and above-board. Ain't that what we decided sittin' over there in Pete's place?

DOLLY

Well, it don't seem right somehow. . . .

BERT

Now listen, Dolly, no use gettin' up in the air. It's as plain as the nose on your face. You and me have fell for each other hard, and as it happens I'm married there's only one thing to do—to tell Ruby.

DOLLY

You can tell her all right, but what'll she do?

BERT

Naturally, at first she'll prob'ly raise hell, but after she cools down she'll see it our way. I know Ruby like a book.



DOLLY

Maybe it's just because I ain't used to it yet. Remember, Bert, I never laid eyes on you before tonight.

BERT

(*Fondly.*) But you admit I'm just about the cat's meow, doncha?

DOLLY

If I wasn't afraid makin' you stuck up I'd say so.

BERT

There's one thing I never told you yet. When Ruby and me was married we agreed if either the one or the other of us saw anyone we liked better we could break away—quit flat, without no fireworks, no regrets. That makes it sound better to you, don't it?

DOLLY

I think so. This is really the first time since you been married you ever felt this way about anyone?

BERT

Absolutely! When you walked into Pete's tonight I felt I'd knowed you for years. You suited me from the ground up. And I wasn't on the lookout for anything either; I'd just dropped in for a plate o' ham and eggs before goin' to bed. Why you s'pose I got the waiter to give me a knockdown to you if I wasn't so gone on you?

DOLLY

I admit it got me all fussed up—before the others and all.

BERT

When I found out you was a artist, too, that's all I needed! I went completely cuckoo.

DOLLY

I'll say!

BERT

Wait till you see the act I'm goin' to frame for us! I tell you, kid, we're made for each other. We can't fight against it—it's bigger'n we are.

DOLLY

(*Modestly.*) I don't wanta fight against it—if your wife'll give you up.

BERT

(*Beaming.*) You'll never be sorry you said that. That's all I wanta know. (*Coming closer.*) Give us a kiss—for good luck!

DOLLY

(*Pushing him away virtuously.*) Not till we've the right! Nobody can say I ever come between husband and wife. Go on, wake her up. Let's get it over with.

BERT

Better not let her see you till she gets her bearings. She'll have enough of a shock as it is.

(*DOLLY moves to the other side of the room, where she sits in the shadow. BERT leans over the sleeping form.*)

BERT

(*To DOLLY.*) All ready?

DOLLY

Any time you are.

(*BERT plucks gingerly at the counterpane*)

BERT

Ruby! Wake up and listen a minute. . . . Ruby!

(*RUBY stirs, but makes no further response.*)

DOLLY

(*Interested.*) I'll say she's a hard sleeper!

BERT

(*Shaking RUBY gently.*) Ruby! Shake it off!

(*RUBY opens her eyes and looks up wildly at her husband.*)

RUBY

Say, what's eatin' on you!

BERT

Listen, Ruby, I got something to tell you.



RUBY

(*Turning over again.*) Don't wanta hear it. . . . I need my sleep!

BERT

(*To DOLLY.*) You see! That's the kind o' wife I got!

(*BERT shakes RUBY again.*)

BERT

You gotta wake up, Ruby, and you might as well make up your mind to it.

RUBY

Save it till morning. . . .

BERT

What I gotta tell you won't keep till morning.

RUBY

(*Crossly.*) Well, what is it?

(*Now that the crucial moment has arrived, BERT hardly knows where to begin.*)

BERT

Turn around so you can get me straight. Here's your kimono—slip it on.

RUBY

(*Complying.*) Say, who do you think you are! Not satisfied with battin' round till all hours of the night yourself, you gotta wake me up, too! Why can't you get in bed like a human being without disturbin' everybody in the hotel?

BERT

(*Solemnly.*) There's a good reason why I woke you up, Ruby.

RUBY

Go on and spring it!

BERT

(*Hesitantly.*) Ruby, you remember what we promised to each other the day we got married?

RUBY

(*Hotly.*) You wake me up in the dead o' night to ask me that!

BERT

(*Anxious to get it over with.*) You remember? We said if either one of us ever met up with someone we like better we'd be on the level and tell the other one right away.

(*RUBY is wide awake now.*)

RUBY

Say, what is this—!

BERT

(*Floridly.*) I come to tell you, Ruby, I've met that someone tonight—a little girl, who, sorry as I am to tell you, means everything in the world to me.

RUBY

(*Dropping back on the pillows.*) Aw, go to bed—you're drunk!

BERT

(*Hurt.*) I'm not—I'm cold sober! And I'm in dead earnest. You ain't backin' out on our bargain, are you?

RUBY

Don't make me laugh! If anyone's fool enough to want you, I say take you and welcome! When they get to know you like I do they'll give you the air so fast it'll make your head swim!

BERT

That's what *you* say! Well, no one can say I wasn't on the level with you. I've come clean with the whole story—no cheatin' behind your back like many a man woulda done.

RUBY

You wanta leave tonight?

BERT

There ain't no particular hurry now that we understand each other. If you say so, we'll go over to Jersey tomorrow and file the divorce papers.

RUBY

You work fast, don't you! He comes in tells me he's met a girl and now he wants a divorce! Have you thought about our thirty weeks Fox time we just signed for?



BERT

Sure. I'll find you another partner around the N. V. A.

RUBY

That's good glue, but it don't stick!

BERT

And I'll give you all rights to our old routine.

RUBY

That's nice of you—since it's mine already.

BERT

Oh, is *that* so!

RUBY

The best of it's mine and you know it, Bert La Motte! Waltheim told us he gave our booking on the strength of that comedy radio-phone dance number I framed. And who thought out the rapid-fire patter we use for a finish? We'd be chasers on a bill yet if it wasn't for me!

BERT

(*Less emphatically.*) Is *that* so!

RUBY

Sure you'll give me the old routine! And what's more you'll starve to death if you have to go out as a single.

BERT

I'm not gonna do a single. Miss Doyle and I—

RUBY

So that's her name—Doyle, is it?

BERT

Miss Doyle and I're gonna head a tab show. We got a swell production doped out. We'll be playin' the Orpheum circuit before the season's out.

RUBY

(*With nice sarcasm.*) What're you goin' to use for money?

BERT

Now, you needn't get nasty—just

because I'm tryin' to do the right thing by you.

RUBY

Where'd you pick up this tramp? Headlining at the Palace this week, I suppose?

(*DOLLY emerges from her seclusion, her feathers up.*)

DOLLY

(*To RUBY.*) Who're you callin' a tramp! You better be careful how you run a person down!

BERT

(*Aside.*) Nix, Dolly! I'll fix it up. . . .

RUBY

(*Astounded.*) Who—who is—*this* . . . !

DOLLY

I'll let you know who I am if you call me a tramp again!

BERT

(*Trying to do the right thing.*) Ruby, this is Miss Doyle. . . . Dolly, meet the wife!

(*There is an electric silence.*)

RUBY

You mean to say you brought her up here right under my nose!

BERT

How else could I show you I was on the level with you . . . open and above-board?

RUBY

(*Witheringly.*) Well, for pure and unadulterated nerve, you get the plaid earrings!

DOLLY

(*To BERT.*) I thought you said your wife would understand!

RUBY

He told you that, did he? Well, I do understand. I understand that I married the dumbest dumbbell that ever walked on two feet!



BERT

Aw, talk sense, Ruby . . . !

RUBY

Sure, I'll talk sense! You brought your affinity up to meet me? Well, I'm glad to meet her. When she gets you she gets a prize package, I'll say! (To DOLLY.) Come closer, I want to congratulate you!

(DOLLY hesitates until BERT nudges her.)

DOLLY

(Surprised.) You wanta congratulate me, . . . ?

RUBY

Give me your hand on it. (DOLLY cautiously extends her hand.) I'm glad to shake it. Take him, and all I can say is, God help you!

BERT

What's the use o' bein' that way, Ruby? Can't we all part friends?

DOLLY

(To BERT.) I told you I oughtn'ta come up here!

(RUBY is still holding DOLLY's hand. She is staring at her intently. DOLLY tries to pull her hand away.)

RUBY

No, let me look at you a minute.

BERT

What's the big idea?

RUBY

Say, where have we met before?

DOLLY

(In the grand manner.) Have we met before . . . ?

RUBY

We have. . . . You say your name is Doyle?

DOLLY

That's what it is now—Dolly Doyle. I ain't ashamed of it.

RUBY

We've met somewhere, that's sure.

DOLLY

That's what I said to your husband when we first come in. I said you looked familiar.

RUBY

Where you been the last few years—what time, I mean?

DOLLY

Mostly Eastern time—Poli, Fox, Inter-state . . . some Gus Sun.

RUBY

Couldn't've been on any of them. We've been playin' Loew's since the Flood, seems to me. . . .

DOLLY

Well, I don't know then. . . .

RUBY

Ever do any specialties to speak of?

DOLLY

When I was a kid I done a number in rompers and pig-tails. Frances White stole all her stuff from me.

RUBY

The "Won't You Be My Beau" number?

DOLLY

That's the one! It was written for me specially by Roy Leddy—his first big hit. He's my brother.

RUBY

(Excitedly.) I've got you now! H a z e l L e d d y! Little Hazel Leddy . . . !

DOLLY

That was me all right.

RUBY

Then, you don't remember me? . . . Ruby Nellis . . . ?

DOLLY

Not Ruby Nellis of "Henderson's School Days"!



RUBY

None other! . . . "Henderson's School Days". . .

DOLLY

Ruby!

RUBY

Hazel!

*(Their manner toward each other changes instantly. They warmly embrace. BERT, who has been listening uneasily, now edges closer.)*

BERT

Say, what is this—Old Home Week! *(The two women pay no attention to him. In disgust BERT lights a cigarette and waits for more.)*

RUBY

My Lord—how long ago's that been!

DOLLY

Don't ask me. Let's not think about it!

RUBY

*(Happily reminiscent.)* There was a schooldays act for you! Gus Edwards ain't gotta thing on old Jake Henderson.

DOLLY

Jake passed in his checks last winter. Hear about it?

RUBY

I noticed it in *Variety*. Out in Tacoma, wasn't it? Bright's disease. . . .

DOLLY

He was a good old wagon. Remember how he used to be sorta daddy to all o' us? I'll never forget how he used to make me take a dose o' castor oil when I looked like I needed it. . . .

*(The two women laugh heartily.)*

RUBY

You remember Rose Wiess?

DOLLY

Do I? Didn't we used to fight in every town to see who'd get first shot at the electric iron we bought together?

RUBY

Well, when we played the Kedzie out in Chi last spring she caught our act and come round back to see me. She's married to an insurance agent. Got two kids and says she couldn't be no happier.

DOLLY

I bumped into Chic Howard up in Boston last month. He's managin' a burlesque house up there—rollin' in money. His own car, and everything.

RUBY

Chic Howard! . . . Who'd ever thought that little bum would have amounted to anything!

DOLLY

He didn't have sense enough to come in out of the rain when we knew him.

RUBY

I suppose you've heard how Fred Link is knockin' 'em for a row of ash-cans on the other side. He's a panic. . . . Got a picture company of his own and writes his own contract. I met Solly Goldman in at the N. V. A. the other day—said Fred was touted to play leads with Pola Negri. I guess he's not gettin' on!

DOLLY

That sure was a great gang! At least, they all seemed great to me then. It was my first job. . . .

RUBY

I'll never forget the first day I saw you. It was in Omaha, wasn't it?

DOLLY

Yeh, one of the girls got ptomaine, and Jake Henderson wires me to join the show. I never was so thrilled in my life.

RUBY

You sure were a pretty little thing; I remember you wore a purple hat with a flame-colored ostrich plume.

DOLLY

God, I was green . . . !



RUBY

At first. But it didn't take you long to get wised up.

DOLLY

Yeh, but you know why? Because you were so white about showin' me the ropes, and keepin' my courage up. I'd a quit at the end o' that first week if you hadn't give me a talking-to.

RUBY

I didn't do no more than anyone would of.

DOLLY

Oh, yes you did. You were the only one at first that even give me a pleasant look.

RUBY

I just showed you how the routine went.

DOLLY

Well, what you done I've never forgot. . . . I may have forgot you for a while, but I never forgot your helpin' me. And I ain't never stopped bein' grateful either, Ruby.

(BERT has endured these reminiscences as long as he can.)

BERT

(Barking.) Ain't you two had about enough o' that!

RUBY

You keep outa this, Bert La Motte! It's none of your business. We'll talk all night if we want to.

(BERT continues his sulking.)

DOLLY

After all you've done for me. . . . And to think I almost took him away from you!

RUBY

(Looking hard at Bert.) Don't mind that. You'da been doin' me a favor.

BERT

(Ineffectually.) Oh, she would, would she!

DOLLY

Thank God, I found out about it in time. Just know this, Ruby, I wouldn't do anything to hurt or harm a hair o' yours for anything in the world. Your husband give me such a rush over at Pete's tonight that I sorta lost my head. But you can betcha I got my senses back now. And just to show you I mean it, I'll beat it right now and give you my word never to speak to him again.

BERT

(Mournfully to himself.) What was I ever thinkin' of to bring you up here in the first place . . . !

RUBY

I'm tickled to death you did—

DOLLY

Else how would we ever 'a met again, Ruby?

RUBY

(Warmly.) It's great to see you again. . . .

DOLLY

(Taking RUBY's hand.) I'm over at the Traymore—layin' off this week. Call me up and have lunch with me?

(Suddenly a delicious bit of revenge comes into RUBY's mind. She surreptitiously nudges DOLLY.)

RUBY

It's so late gettin' back to your hotel, why don't you stay here the rest o' the night? We can have a good long talk about old times.

(DOLLY at first is on the point of refusing, then the idea does not seem so preposterous. She sees through RUBY's little game.)

DOLLY

(Feigning uncertainty.) Why, I don't know. . . .

RUBY

Come on, stay. Here's a nice bed all to yourself. We'll send Bert out for sandwiches and coffee in the morning.



(BERT is flabbergasted by this turn of events.) slamming the door. RUBY and DOLLY break into laughter.)

BERT

Where do you think I'm gonna sleep?

RUBY

(Carelessly.) Oh, on the floor. . . . Or if you'd rather there's a sofa in the parlor.

(BERT starts to make a stinging reply, but only succeeds in sputtering instead.)

DOLLY

(Egged on by RUBY.) I'd love to stay if you don't think I'd be puttin' anyone out.

RUBY

Bert don't mind. Not when it's for you. . . .

BERT

The hell I don't!

(He dashes angrily from the room,

DOLLY

That's the way—treat 'em rough!

RUBY

Bert'll think twice before he pulls a trick like this again! I got him just where I want him.

DOLLY

(Removing hat and coat.) I'll hand it to you, Ruby—thinkin' of this. I hate to sleep away from my trunk, but if it'll help you I don't mind.

RUBY

Thanks, Hazel. You'll find a comb and brush and some cold cream in the bathroom.

(DOLLY goes out. And RUBY sinks back on the pillows with a look of supreme satisfaction on her face.)

CURTAIN



## The Old Spinner

By Virginia Lyne Tunstall

ALL around me  
Is the hot room,  
And the dust stirred  
By the loud loom.

Yet I am back  
By my own sea,  
And a wind comes  
And touches me,

Where the gulls rise  
From the white sand—  
Ah, the wind of the loom  
And the tears on my hand!





# What Was Mine

*By Abigail Cresson*

THE song you sing is my song,  
But what is that to you?  
For I am but a shadow  
The wind blows through.

I am but a name, a face,  
And yet the song you sing  
Is the one you taught to me  
In another spring.

How could you forget so soon?  
Yet what is that to me  
Since I have forgotten you,  
And we are free?

So why should I be weeping  
When all is said and done,  
For a little song you sing  
To another one?



A MAN sees a flag waving and rushes out to die. He sees a woman's hand waving and rushes out to make a fool of himself.



A MAN'S tongue is what gets him into trouble. A woman's is what gets her out of it.



WOMEN hesitate and men are lost.





# Six Little Stories

By Luigi Lucatelli

(Translated by Morris Bishop)

## I

### *The Little Victim*

ROSINA entered the Children's Home accompanied by universal pity. She was thirteen years old and pretty. In the courtroom she had understood the thing that had happened to her better than when it had taken place.

It had happened during one of her accustomed wanderings, for she was used to roaming about by day and night, wet, muddy, famished, through the great hostile streets, full of strange people. It had seemed to her that all the filthy, threatening houses which she had brushed by, dragging her wooden shoes, had in a flash come to life; it had seemed that the cold wind, the rain, the hunger, had taken bodily shape in a dreadful bearded man smelling of tobacco and brandy, and in a torturing sensation of fear which had driven her to cry "Mama! Mama!"—although she had never known any Mama. She did know old Aunt Filomena, who gave her a heap of straw for a bed, a glass of wine when there was any, and an occasional beating.

From the day of the trial a new life began; she heard people say marvelous, compassionate words; she was made much of; flowers were pinned on her. She came to have a certain pride. She had learned the words the newspapers had used concerning her. A little girl who came into the Home and was made her room-mate said to her:

"I'm the little girl whose Mama

jumped off the Ponte Milvio, and who are you?"

"Me? I'm the little girl who was assaulted in the via degli Zingari!" she answered haughtily.

"Oo-oh!" said the other with admiration.

At first she went about in a daze. She had the terrified feeling of a peasant suddenly finding himself seated at an aristocratic banquet. She heard grown-up people speak to her, with a look of pity on their severe faces. The Sisters passed near her in silence, gazing at her fixedly with an indefinable expression of curiosity and fear. The Mother Superior would say to her,

"Poor child, poor child! So young and yet already so hopelessly lost!"

Or again,

"Poor little thing! To think that she can never be happy!"

There was a general, persistent atmosphere of emotion about her; the tears of the whole city dripped upon her badgered little self. Everyone felt an acute desire to contrast the innocence of her great black eyes with the uncancellable outrage she had suffered, to cast a flower upon the living tomb of her purity.

It seemed to her that she was forever moving in a church, where the congregation watched her with sweet, sad resignation, as if the body of a dead girl were passing by.

Once when another girl made a mischievous remark she broke into a laugh. The Sisters looked at her with infinite sadness and the Mother Superior said in a tearful voice,



"My child, think of the horrible thing that has happened; seek peace in the Lord and pray that He may give you in heaven the happiness which He has denied you upon this earth."

Another time a beautiful blonde lady came to see her; the child stared at her with ardent curiosity, but the teacher pulled her sleeve and said,

"My child, do not stare in that shameless manner; at least have the decency to keep your eyes on the ground!"

Gradually she became accustomed to the rôle of the Child of Misfortune. She learned to weep at the right moment and she walked with eyes always downcast. But the great yellow tiles of the convent floor became odious to her. At night she dreamed of that dismal yellow checkerboard, as of a boundless desert.

She had mad outbursts of secret joy. She felt wild longings to roll upon the grass, to sing and laugh; but all such gay and violent things had become con-founded in her mind with a suspicious, forbidden Eden, a sort of guilty Paradise, smelling of tobacco and brandy.

One night she slipped softly from her bed, and tiptoed to the window, because the moon was so bright that it seemed day. She could see the white, deserted street, filled with fragrance from the double row of acacias; far away a mandolin was playing a waltz. It seemed to her that her heart was opened; a great wave of pure and perfumed air submerged her utterly. The sound of the mandolin stirred her more than the church organ, brought a myriad laughing faces flashing before her eyes, lit in her veins a raging desire to dance and cry aloud.

She looked down the dormitory. A great black Christ upon the wall spread His arms wide, as if He too were saying, with all the others,

"So young, and yet already doomed forever!"

She tossed her head, put her fingers to her nose and murmured:

"Oh, fudge!"

Then she slipped out of the window, very slowly, and set off at a run down

the white street, toward the far-away mandolin trilling its waltz in the night.

## II

### Bibi

HE had happened in there one rainy evening to while away a little time after a weary day's study, and the tepor of the place, with its acrid odor of smoke, musk, and liquors, had held him too long. He did not enjoy the audience at all; it was the customary public of a third-rate café-concert. Much-pomaded non-commissioned officers; a few office clerks and underlings; a number of aged libertines in the stalls nearest the stage, idiotically blissful in the amiable smiles of the stars, happily keeping time to the choruses by tapping their spoons against their glasses. And yet, that evening decided his fate.

When I knew him, Lorette had already conquered him. Lorette was a *chanteuse* of some twenty-five years, with eyes rather too black and an enormous chignon, with no voice and no sense of shame. She was of peasant origin and she sang in the Neapolitan dialect, with that false cadencing of café-concert ballads. When she came down from the stage and circulated among the tables making her little collection, she greeted her admirers by nicknames: Sicily, Blackie, Old Whiskers, and so forth; a very vulgar trick which vaguely pointed to a training in questionable quarters. Lorette's past was dark as a night of tempest. Some of the old libertines boasted in undertones of having given her a graduate degree when she was sixteen years old.

Lorette called the newcomer Bibi. And as he came every evening, never said anything, did not pinch her and had two large penetrating and thoughtful eyes, romantic eyes, in ill accord with his stoutish and pacific person, Lorette took a fancy to him. Her fancy was pointed and brazen; it roused the dislike and reprobation of a sergeant of the Treasury Guards, of a young haberdasher's clerk, and of an



elderly pensioned officer, all of whom were aspiring to her favors.

Bibi sank into the slough without realizing it. Something shining in him was slowly veiled in shadow; his idealism was gradually paralyzed in that warm atmosphere of unhealth, the garments of his soul were spotted with mire. One day he had a dispute with her, and Lorette asserted that *her men* had never treated her so. He fled. It was as if he had leaped out of his own life, and for an instant he saw himself clear of the flames.

But his folly had brought him to an abject pitch; he was obliged to confess to himself baldly the following facts: he loved Lorette; it was perfectly natural that the woman he loved, that mystical fair being of his youthful dreams, should be a thing any man could handle; it was certain that the old libertines were filthy liars; there was a French word, *crânerie*, which justified, with something of a Bohemian savor, all the liberties accorded by Lorette to her admirers. That evening he returned to Lorette. He was a little paler, a little sadder, there were deep lights in his great pensive eyes, but he took his seat at his accustomed table, with a feeling of horror at the thought of seeing through the cloud of bluish smoke the same puffed face of the waiter, and of hearing Cicillo Bomba, the Eccentric Comedian, utter the same depressing jests as the day before.

It was as if a cold, unceasing rain were falling on his naked soul, whipping it without pity, without rest.

He continued to sink downward. He descended to the level of his surroundings; he felt an invidious professional rancor against Clary, Lorette's fellow-performer and rival; he argued the merits of the orchestra leader, he went on outings in the country with Cicillo Bomba, and he discussed politics with the Duke, a respectable personage of unknown history who had white moustaches and paid earnest court to Lorette.

He beat Lorette and had his face scratched by her, he got drunk, he came to blows with Old Whiskers, and he

had a dispute with the sergeant of the Treasury Guard which became an affair of honor, but the affair of honor was arbitrated and ended with a banquet.

Sometimes, as Lorette was singing, there were silent moments of fear in his spirit, when he saw his life as a drowning man sees the sun, through a cloud of dirty water, and a bitter longing to smite himself in his humiliation tore at his heart. But Lorette was beginning to sing: "*Partendo dal villaggio. . .*" And he felt something soft and tenacious, like an arm with flesh somewhat flabby, but warm and harshly perfumed, slipping about his neck and holding him close, invincibly.

For this reason he one day swallowed two pastilles of corrosive sublimate. But he did not even succeed in dying, and while he was sick Lorette betrayed him with Blackie.

I saw the three of them in a country inn, together with the Duke, who was paying the bill.

### III

#### *Signora Dora's Little Economies*

SIGNORA DORA was thirty-two years old; she had beautiful oxygenated blonde hair, a lovely baby mouth, and two pet names: Zizi and Lulù. She would say to her husband: "Little Zizi wants a new little tiny hat," and she would say to her lover: "Little Lulù lives for you, only, only, only!" She had also some quaint childish gestures which set her off very well. When Alfredo, who was a cavalry officer, said to her: "Going to kiss her three-ee million times!" she would open her eyes wide like a child listening to a fearful story, clasp her hands and say: "Oh, how *brave* you are!"

Alfredo would thereupon feel heroic, sublime, and rather idiotic.

One day Dora had a good talk with her dear friend Jane, who kept no secrets from her. Jane confided the fact that she had given her adored Bibi, student, Bohemian and dandy, a stick-pin with a brilliant in it. Dora reflected that Alfredo would be very



grateful for a handsome riding-crop with an engraved gold knob.

It was on this memorable occasion that she had from Jane an explanation of the mechanism of Little Economies.

The following day she studied the matter deeply, and after exhaustive inquiries into the various items of the domestic budget she summoned her son's tutor, an old Latinist of great learning and therefore extremely poor. She said to him: "Professor, will you help me out of rather a bad fix? Our expenses have been terrific lately, and we will have to get along without you. However, if you would care to accept half your present salary for a few months, I shall be very happy to have you continue."

The professor turned pale, but as his face was so full of wrinkles the signora noticed nothing. But a month later the chambermaid, who had a high sense of the honor of the house, was scandalized to see the Professor in a nearby doorway, making a lunch out of a penny's worth of bread and another penny's worth of cheese.

She also ceased to employ a seamstress, and sent her work to a nunnery where many rescued girls were working. In this way she made a great saving and did an act of charity. Indeed, she was so well pleased by this device that she reported it to all her friends, and the seamstress was obliged to resort to another and less respectable occupation.

But the cleverest expedient concerned the servants' food, on which she was able to make great economies by cutting the wine ration in two and by applying to the choice of dishes the theories of Dr. Brobadoff, who attests the extraordinary nutritive qualities of potatoes.

The result was that the coachman had a slight gastric disturbance, the cook's anemia was somewhat aggravated, there was a scandal in the family of the laundress, who forgot all the rules of morality, and the Professor fainted on the stairs. But on Saint Alfred's Day Dora presented the Lieu-

tenant with a stupendous riding-crop with the knob chiseled in the Liberty style.

Alfredo turned pink with joy and said, "But how did you do it?"

She did her cunning baby pout, and pointed prettily to herself.

"Lulu's a bright little girl," she said, "'n she makes her little economies!"

Alfredo embraced her, crying: "DEAREST, dearest, dearest!"

#### IV

#### *The Petitioner*

For years and years he had been haunting the Minister's antechamber. He was a little old man, stooped, thin, and melancholy, but clean and neat. He would arrive with his shuffling, burdened step and ask: "Is His Excellency in?" The ushers would say: "Yes, but he's busy."

Then he would take his seat in his customary corner of the horse-hair sofa and wait. Several hours later an usher would tell him: "His Excellency has gone out." Then he would go away.

He doubtless had a petition in his pocket, but evidently he did not wish to present it to anyone but His Excellency.

In these long years he had seen dozens of Ministers rise and fall, but he was carried over from Cabinet to Cabinet like a neglected item on the books. Only once was there any question of driving him away. A head clerk conceived the idea that he came there for shelter, so as not to be cold in winter or warm in summer. This suspicion roused the indignation of that excellent functionary, but a copyist who was noted for his wit suggested: "Why not give him his appointment with His Excellency?"

So the matter blew over with a roar of laughter, and he was allowed to stay.

Before long his corner of the sofa was modeled to fit his angular body, and he knew all the objects in the antechamber as if he were in his own home. He remembered the archaic days when petroleum was used for lighting, when



the ushers would align twelve oil lamps on the table; he remembered the advent of gas and of electricity; he remembered the hunchbacked usher who was always coughing and who shortly died; he remembered the Secretary who walked about with hanging head, while the clerks laughed under their mustaches and asked each other: "What's the latest about the old man's wife?"

His thin and melancholy figure had harmonized itself miraculously with the surroundings, as if he had in his own being the faded tints of the wallpaper, the spots of ink making constellations upon the waxed surface of the table, and the tick-tock of the tall old clock with the round eye in its wooden case, through which one could see the brass disk of the pendulum pass and repass.

There was in him and in his surroundings something petty and hopeless, a sort of stifled yawn. Especially toward sunset, everything was dimmed and mingled in a desolate, unhappy gloom of color and sound, and the eye of the clock was filled with shadows, through which shot periodically a yellow sparkle. Then the lamps were lit, and the darkness seemed to fly out of the window and settle on the great black piazza, dotted with little golden lights.

In the end he had come to have preferences for certain features of the place; on the ceiling, just over his head, the humidity had painted a curious stain, which seemed the fantastic sketch of a warrior, shield on arm. He would stare at this stain and mentally complete the design. Then he would murmur to himself. "Yes, it is really a warrior with his shield." And he would fall into a sort of gray stupor, through which throbbed and beat the tick-tock of the clock, like a sentinel posted there to prevent him from entering.

So many Ministers had come and gone! Swaggering and pompous Ministers, whose feet clashed on the pavement with the step of Conquerors; melancholy Ministers, with the air of much-preoccupied imbeciles; Ministers with beards, with moustaches, with

English whiskers, with Napoleon III goatees; Ministers young and old, a great throng of gentlemen dressed in black, who never brought within doors anything of the swirling turmoil of the streets, as if the silence of the room stilled all the voices of their spirit with its tick-tock of aimless and interminable hours.

One day when he arrived he seemed a little more stooped than usual; he asked his invariable question and received the invariable reply. He shuffled to his accustomed corner and set himself to study the stain upon the ceiling. It was not very clear that day; it seemed to him that the warrior was moving slowly, with a vague and menacing gesture, laughing in his face a stupid, vindictive laugh, and murmuring:

"You'll never get in!"

Then the voice of the clock became deeper and louder, like the step of an inexorable policeman imperiously approaching. He was seen to turn pale and fall backward on the sofa. The ushers ran to him; and His Excellency, happening to leave his office at that moment, also drew near and looked in the bewildered face, and in the eyes, staring with a strange, uncanny light.

"Who are you?" said the Minister. "What is your name?"

His reply could hardly be heard; they could understand in his babbling and stuttering only the words: "the people—the people—"

"Don't know him!" said His Excellency.

He blew his nose.

## V

### *History of an Idiot*

SIGNOR TELESFORO COCCIA was an idiot. But not an ordinary idiot.

He was consistent, self-aware, and proud of his quality. He would say, "I'm an idiot, but there you are!" and pound the table brutally.

He had a bulging forehead like an overstuffed suitcase, large, protruding eyes, a flat nose, tumid lips and dis-



orderly hair. He always seemed to be on the point of butting an obstacle with his head, because he walked with his head held low and inclined slightly forward.

When a boy in school he had kept himself curled up in a corner, dumb and sulky. His teacher, who understood boys and who had read the then popular *Cuore* of De Amicis, would gaze at him with a certain pity and say: "There is Stardi!"

Thus everyone got the idea that he had an obstinate will. When he went up for his examinations and failed utterly, everyone said: "Poor devil, he's an idiot, but what a Will!"

In fact he had no will at all, and he walked with his head held low and inclined slightly forward because it was so heavy.

By good luck he was comfortably well off. When he became a man his fellow-townsmen saw him nearly always alone. He spoke little, and when he did speak he aspirated his r's with a ferocious grunt and puffed his f's as if he were trying to blow out a lamp.

This solitude and this savage method of expression created about him a certain aureole of superiority.

Finally he adopted spectacles, and the grim and crude aspect of his person was suddenly ennobled. The sky is only the sky, but one may imagine Infinity behind a screen of cardboard. Behind that pair of spectacles one could imagine a look that would probably indicate a brain.

One day at the café someone said to him:

"You ought to run for deputy!"

"No!" he shouted, almost yelled, and pounded his glass on the table with such force that the glass broke in his hand.

That broken glass made his fortune.

As the country was beginning to feel the agitations of subversive factions, the dream of all good citizens was to hire a band of cutthroats to re-establish the rule of law and order.

The professor of Italian in the seminary knocked a boy down because he had quoted in a composition some words

from a subversive book, by Victor Hugo. When it was proved that the words were in fact taken from the Bible, the liberal newspaper of the city published an article entitled: *In Defense of Jesus Christ*, and was suppressed for an offense against the religion of the State.

In those days when decent people saw Telesforo Coccia pass, they would say, "Ah, if only that man would take up the task!" It seemed as though he might strangle the hydra of Revolution. The prefect of the city, who was a deep fellow, managed to persuade him to run for deputy, and wrote a splendid speech for him. Telesforo read it with such grunting and snorting that all the Conservative Party cried, "There is a hero!"

But certainly, if the man had met the goddess of Liberty in the street, he would have knocked her down by butting her in the stomach.

In the Chamber he never spoke. He kept silent in a corner, as he had at school, sulky and suspicious of all the people who talked about things he knew nothing of. Faithful to his mandate, he always voted the contrary of the vote of the extreme Left. Once he voted against the Ministry, merely because the Minister had said: "Our victory will mean the victory of Democracy." The Minister had lied, and everyone said that Telesforo was a man of character. He was much sought after in the *salons* of the black aristocracy, and the ladies smiled with tender pride as he used his tea-napkin for a handkerchief.

"What character!" said they.

One day when the Minister was protesting that he must yield to the pressure of the Labor groups, a deputy seated near Teodoro, blond, rich and *blasé*, murmured in the direction of the Minister: "Oh, but resist 'em!" And Telesforo repeated with a ferocious bellow:

"Resist! Resist! Resist!"

All the members turned to look at him, and the president of the Ministry murmured:

"There is a Man!"



That is how it came about that he was chosen Minister.

## VI

*A Man for the Ages*

SIGNOR DORIFORIANO was not a man of character, nor yet was he a man of courage. One day when he had dared to write on an office schedule *receipt* instead of *receipt*, as the office manager wished it to be written, he submitted to a good dressing-down seasoned with personal comments and he was too frightened even to tremble.

But within the walls of his home he became a different man. Even as a boy, when he had been kicked by a companion whom he did not dare to kick back, he had built castles in the air and dreamed of being one of those men of blood and iron who impose their will upon the crowd by the mere fascination of their gaze. In the evening, alone in his room, he would stand before the mirror with his right hand thrust into his breast, like Napoleon, and hypnotize his own reflection with terrible scowls. His boundless admiration for men of great energy and character manifested itself with extraordinary violence in his most trifling actions. He must have been a relative of that character of Jules Vallès who, being so fat that he could not lace his shoes, would murmur sadly: "Ah! I was born to be a pirate!"

He was born to be an Emperor. Once, after seeing Cossa's *Nero* in the theater, the first thing he did on returning home was to give the dog a violent kick; he would have given him two, if he had not been nervous about the landlord, who was a notorious friend of animals.

When Doriforiano had a wife, a son, a maid and two canaries under his authority, he was happy. He had possessed himself of a little world within whose bounds he reigned with absolute power. His gestures were classical; he ordered the maid to clear the table with the voice of Cæsar crying: "The tenth legion, forward!" When his wife

said: "My dear, are we going for a walk this evening?" he would reply with an ominous frown: "No, we are not going for a walk this evening, so Silence! I may break, I do not bend."

When he rang the bell a shudder of terror ran through the whole house. He would appear, scowling sternly, and order in a cold, peremptory voice: "My slippers, my pipe, my newspaper, quick!" His wife, his maid, his son would dash in three different directions.

In these three timid beings was the hidden spring that watered and nourished his character. His wife was a pale little bundle of a woman, who would have died of fright at the sight of a mouse, the maid was a sort of savage Redskin who had been kicked from the Abruzzo to Rome, the boy was a chronic sufferer from rickets. Doriforiano would say with much firmness to his business associates: "My family? I hold them in the palm of my hand, like this!"

His masterful character was also manifested outside the home. When he took the street-car, he would signal to the motorman to stop the car with the gesture of Joshua commanding the sun to halt. In every circumstance when he could assert his imperious will without getting himself kicked, he displayed it eagerly. The telephone girls heard him announce the desired numbers as if they were army divisions to be mobilized, and his call to the newsboy: "Give me a *Tribuna*!" was like the "Halt! Who's there?" of a sentinel.

Thus he was completely thrown off his bearings when he received indisputable proof that his wife was betraying him with a neighbor, a twenty-year-old student, tall as a Grenadier.

Evidently the poor lady had felt the need of a less imperious and more cajoling voice.

Doriforiano meditated horrible deeds, but in the midst of them all appeared the athletic form of his supplanter. He therefore conceived the idea of hiding his terrible secret deep within himself, while plotting implacable vengeance; he



saw himself as the Count of Monte Cristo in his conjugal misfortune.

He gazed at himself in the glass, assumed a properly fatal pose and murmured to himself with haughty pride: "I shall seal my lips, yes, I shall seal my lips, though I die of it. I may break, I do not bend!"



## Requiescat

*By Clark Ashton Smith*

WHAT was Love's worth,  
Who lived with the roses?—  
Love that is earth  
And with earth reposes!

What was Love's wonder?—  
Scent of the flow'rs  
After the thunder,  
Thunder, and show'rs!

What were the breathless  
Words that he said?—  
Love that was deathless,  
Love that is dead!

\* \* \* \*

Echo hath taken  
The song, and flown;  
None shall awaken  
Music and moan.

Buds and the flower,  
All that Love found,  
Last but an hour,  
Strewn on his mound.



WHEN a man's fame travels ahead of him he is welcomed by the Chamber of Commerce. When a woman's travels ahead of her, she is informed by the hotel clerk that the house is full.





# Mr. Ballinger's Home

*By Victor Thaddeus*

## I

MR. BALLINGER'S home was sacred to him. It was a corner of the universe peculiarly and indubitably his. Home was the most real word in his vocabulary. His home consisted of Grace, Paul and himself.

He sat on the edge of a chair, his mouth open, and a detached expression distorting his heavy features, as though there existed no communication between his thoughts and the thick, uncertain fingers that worried with the mandolin pressed against his stomach. He was a large, square-shouldered man with a habit of staring attentively at people when he was not thinking about them.

Grace had gone to the Symphony, and he was taking care of Paul. His chair was so placed that by raising a hand he could part the portières and take a look at the baby. Now and again when Paul whimpered he put down the mandolin, and went in to arrange the bed-clothes or to move the crib gently back and forth upon its rubber wheels until quiet was restored. Paul was a year old, and their first child.

Mr. Ballinger had discovered that mandolin music soothed Paul to sleep, if not played too loud. He could not pick out many tunes, and only three chords. Grace tuned the mandolin for him. He was proud of her knowledge of what he called the higher music. He himself could not follow the melody in a symphony concert, and preferred the simpler tunes that a man could whistle as an outlet to moods sentimental, patriotic or exuberant.

The baby had been quiet for half an

hour when he put the mandolin in the window seat, and occupied himself with the evening paper. He frowned. The Reynolds divorce case was still headlined. Mr. Ballinger wished that that devil Guigne, a Frenchman and an interior decorator, who had alienated Mrs. Reynolds' affections, could have been lynched before he died. He would have liked to have a hand in that lynching.

He sat staring over the top of the paper, vaguely discerning a general rule that would guard a husband against such a thing as this. It would be wise for a man to distrust all the Latin peoples; the Southern Europeans comprising Spaniards, Italians and Greeks. Since childhood he had been aware of their infidelity and immorality. The Scandinavians could be trusted as honorable.

He was brooding over the matter when Fred Hodd called to see him. Hodd was his partner in the firm of Ballinger and Hodd, Leather Supplies, and he thought a lot of Fred. They had attended the same school; they had been business rivals until the partnership was effected. Fred had come in to talk business, and to continue their conversation of that afternoon. The leather trade was dull, and Ballinger and Hodd were considering going into the mail-order business. Through the South-West especially, where harness fittings and saddles were important commodities and local dealers charged hold-up prices, the prospects looked good.

Fred was a tall dark man with a black moustache. He was unmarried,



thirty-nine, and lived with his mother. Mr. Ballinger did not care for his mother, who had been a Miss Vatalano before her marriage—an Italian girl. But Fred himself was such an out-and-out American that he forgave his partner this congenital weakness. And Fred's father, Mr. Hodd, had been an Englishman, so, in the melting pot, as Mr. Ballinger understood the matter, the bloods had neutralized.

Mr. Ballinger had not been entirely won over to the mail-order idea. After several minutes' conversation he changed the subject to the Reynolds divorce case. The idea that there was a chance for good profits in the venture, while still there was a risk attached, irritated him, and he felt a malevolent fury surge in him against this man Guigne.

His heavy face reddened, and he started to bring his fist down on the table. Then he remembered Paul, asleep, and he held it poised an inch above the walnut surface.

"By God, Fred, if any French devil broke up my home I'd kill him!" he exclaimed, moving the fist up and down like a hammer while he stared at his partner.

"Fault of the husband in this case. He shouldn't have let his wife run around alone so much," said Fred, with a yawn.

Mr. Ballinger started an argument. In his opinion Mr. Reynolds had been as innocent of guilt as an unborn babe, as that little child in there, pointing toward the portières. He felt angry with Fred for saying such a thing. Single men didn't understand what was meant by the sacredness of the home, like a married man did. And he thought of Fred's mother. That woman with her black, piercing eyes, and wrinkled face, and ways of pronouncing *th* as *d*, and *w* as *v*, always made him feel uncomfortable whenever he went to Fred's house.

When Fred had gone he went into the kitchen and sat down to a glass of milk and a piece of pound cake. Suddenly he noticed that it was quarter past eleven by the kitchen clock. Grace

was generally back by eleven. He compared the kitchen clock with that in the living-room. There was two minutes difference. He set both of them by his watch, which said twelve after.

He finished the cake hastily, gulped down the milk, filled the glass with water and placed it in the sink to soak. Then he moved restlessly about the living-room, his eyes passing rapidly over the furniture, as though taking an inventory, but always coming back to the closed portières. It occurred to him that there might be a grain of truth in what Fred had said which he should apply to himself and Grace. After this he would have Mrs. Thompson in on Saturday nights, and escort Grace to the Symphony. The thought that this home of his might be broken up left him weak. He sank into a chair.

He heard the front door open and shut. Grace at last. She was coming up the stairs. She was in the hall. As the door opened slowly, and she stood on the threshold smiling at him, the clock struck the half hour. The sound brought Mr. Ballinger to his feet. He stood looking at his wife.

She was small and slender. He was glad she was not a beautiful woman. He remembered the newspaper description of Mrs. Reynolds as a woman of striking appearance. There was nothing striking about Grace. She was eight years his junior—he was thirty-seven—but since Paul's birth she had aged, and looked older than he did.

"Have a good time?" he asked, holding out his hands to her, "You're later than usual tonight."

"Wonderful," she answered, when he had kissed her, "They played Mozart's Jupiter and Beethoven's concerto in E-flat—it was so beautiful. There was an accident in the subway, and our car was held up on account of it. Has the baby been good?"

She parted the portières, and went softly into the adjoining room. A sudden impulse made Mr. Ballinger swing around and peer after her. He saw her bending over the crib. She was touching the baby with her lips, lightly, very



lightly, so that his sleep would not be disturbed. That picture filled him with an immense exultation. He became suddenly a detached observer, and saw the whole picture; the mother bending over the sleeping child, the father standing there at the portières watching them. He wished that Fred were beside him now, that he could show his partner this, and ask him what he thought of it, and if he thought there was any danger of a man like that devil Guigne coming along and breaking up *his* home.

His eyes moved from the dim room to a picture hanging above the davenport; a family scene, with father, mother, children and a dog grouped around the fireplace. That picture had always been his favorite; it was so restful and complete, as though there were no world beyond. They were all looking into the flames, all dreaming, all happy. The mother was older than Grace; there were two boys and a girl; the boys stood by the mother, the girl by the father, and the dog was stretched out between the two chairs. He liked to think of this as his own family in the future. He had no dog now, only a cat that kept rats out of the cellar, but he would certainly get one for the children to play with. They were good faithful animals.

He felt confident and happy. When Grace left the bedroom he asked her playfully if there was any man she loved more than her husband. She stopped quite still, and stared at him a moment. She had a wistful, haggard face.

"Of course not," she answered him, in a low voice, "Whatever made you think of asking a question like that?"

Her dismay pleased him. He drew her toward him, and stroked the wrinkles on her forehead. His wistful, haggard little wife! Again he was glad that she was not beautiful. Beautiful women were exposed to too much temptation. This Guigne devil had come around in the daytime when Mr. Reynolds had been away at his place of business, and Mrs. Reynolds was alone in the house in the same way that Grace was alone.

That night as he lay beside her he continued to think about the matter. He could hear her breathing on one side of him, and the baby on the other. Paul began to toss and moan. He slipped out of bed and comforted the baby. He was drowsy when he got into bed again, but before he went to sleep he revolved a philosophy in his mind. A beautiful woman was like a jewel. He would be afraid to have a valuable jewel in his home. He would not feel secure until he had placed it in a safe deposit vault. So with a beautiful woman—Mrs. Reynolds.

Grace—the baby—no other man wanted them. Any other man would feel it a bother to have to get out of bed at night on account of Paul. They were his—all his. And he had done everything a man could do to safeguard their future in case anything should happen to him; fire insurance, life insurance, all his affairs in perfect order. Grace was asleep now. He would be asleep himself in a moment. He put out his hand and touched her hair. The dim consciousness of her white face filled him with tenderness. He kissed her. His dear, tired little wife.

The baby whimpered a little while they slept.

Mr. Ballinger was dreaming. That Guigne devil—Grace—. He growled like an animal in his sleep. Paul wailed. Grace made no sound. She was very tired.

## II

SUNDAY Mr. Ballinger spent doing odds jobs around the house. In the afternoon Fred came over, and had supper with them. He spoke about the mail order proposition again. Mr. Ballinger sat brooding. What business the firm did now was slow, but sure. This would mean a certain investment. Then the whole thing might amount to nothing.

"What do you think, Grace?" he asked, and as he did so he gave Fred a glance, as though to imply his part-



ner's lack of a wife to consult, even though her opinion might not be given a serious consideration.

Grace looked from one of them to the other. She was holding Paul on her knees. Stroking his head, she replied that the idea seemed a good one to her. Business had to be gone after; more nowadays than ever before. There might be a fortune in it.

Looking at her, Mr. Ballinger made his decision. He must make more money for his family. His home needed a more substantial foundation than he was building for it at the present time. There was only about ten years difference between him and the father in the picture; and that man had the appearance of being wealthy. To make a fortune he must be willing to take a chance. So he agreed to the proposition before Fred left the house that night.

It was decided that Mr. Ballinger should make a trip through the Southwest to look over the territory. Mr. Hodd could not go, as he was in charge of the manufacturing end and needed at the factory.

"You'll have to promise me that you'll go over and see Grace often while I'm gone, Fred! She'll be worried alone," said Mr. Ballinger to his partner before he left.

He spoke solemnly. He would be gone a month at the least, perhaps two; and he had not been separated from Grace for more than a couple of days since their marriage. It would not be as lonely for her now, that she had Paul to take up her time, but still he did not like the idea of the separation. Fred told him not to worry, that he would see she was kept cheered up.

He said good-bye to Grace in their home, telling her to take good care of Paul and not to let him grow too fast. As he held her in his arms his hand patted her head, and neck, and shoulders. She was a frail thing. It occurred to him as a strange provision of nature the way a woman changed after bearing a child, and a man remained the same. Yet a wise one, he con-

sidered—yes, a wise one. Grace had once had a neat little bust; now her breasts were relaxed, and her carriage dropped. When, turning his head as he walked up the street, he saw her standing on the stoop looking after him and waving, her head pushed forward, and her shoulders rather bent, he was glad that she was not of the voluptuous kind, glad that he was leaving this sort of a little wife behind, and not one about whom he would have to be anxious every day he was away, like Mrs. Reynolds. And he was glad that Fred would be over often to cheer her up. Grace was emotional. She was crying now, she would cry while he was away. He liked to realize that she would cry, but he did not want her to cry too much.

He wrote to her daily. He said little in his letters about the place he was writing from, or what he was doing, because as soon as he sat down to write it seemed to him he was in his home again, and there was no other topic of interest. He asked questions, gave instructions, and hoped that everything was going along all right. His letters covered what he would have said to Grace each day had he just returned, to find it was necessary for him to start off again immediately.

In his first letter to Fred, sent within the first week of his departure, he asked how Grace was looking. Fred answered that both she and Paul were as well as ever, and there was nothing to worry about. Never mind about Grace and Paul, said Fred, they would be well looked after—the thing was to keep his eye open for business opportunities. How did they look?

They looked good to Mr. Ballinger. He went to the smaller towns, and studied the directories and telephone books. He priced leather at the harness stores. Ballinger and Hodd could sell cheaper, much cheaper, and still realize a substantial profit. He found money plentiful in this part of the country. The ranches were prosperous, and oil fields numerous. But local dealers were charging exorbitant prices, and he felt



that if the firm offered goods of the same quality, with prompt delivery, it would get the trade.

Two weeks after leaving home his headquarters was a small Texan town near the Border. The inhabitants called it a town; Mr. Ballinger called it a dump. A general store and a dozen adobe huts dumped down on the mesa. In the winter he was told a river raged in the arroyo. Now the only water obtainable was from wells, and that tasted bad to him. But there were a number of large ranches within driving distance, and Mr. Ballinger was interested in these.

He had a room over the store. When night came it seemed to become unbearably hot. He sauntered up the street in his shirt sleeves. All day long the sun had blazed. His eyes ached from the glare of the mesa. Now the sky was black, and he had never seen so many stars. He crossed the arroyo and climbed the mesa, fanning his face with his handkerchief, and making occasional tugs at his wet undershirt. A brightening of the sky ahead of him told him that the moon was rising, and he did not like to miss anything; so he climbed doggedly until he was on top of the mesa. Then he sat down on a large rock, breathing heavily, his hands on his knees, facing the moon.

It was a round, yellow moon of a size that astonished him. It came up as he watched, slowly and solemnly, until it was balanced on the rim of the mesa that seemed infinitely distant. Its nakedness and emptiness frightened Mr. Ballinger. He looked around for the lights of the town but they were hidden from him. Beneath the moon the mesa billowed like a dead sea, with a whiteness that disturbed him. He turned his head, only to find the mesa in that direction black and forbidding by the contrast. He gripped his knees with his fingers, and leaned forward, staring at the moon, and thinking of his home.

Loneliness saddened him, almost to tears. The unities of this place were terrifying; moon, stars, mesa—nothing else. And the moon, the one thing that

moved, was moving away, becoming smaller. The dry earth gave forth a hot persistent fragrance that thickened the air. The silence was so intense he was almost afraid to breathe. He longed for his home, for Grace, wistful, and haggard, and familiar, and Paul wailing in his crib. The picture of that happy family sitting around the fireplace slipped between his eyes and the moon. That was his home, belonged to him; while this belonged to no one.

Suddenly, close beside him, he heard music. His hands trembled against his knees, and his mouth fell open. The sound broke upon his ears so abruptly that he burst into tears. This was not a mandolin, but some stringed instrument akin to it; it sent his thought flying to the contemplation of himself sitting by the portières practising his three chords while he guarded Paul. He walked towards the music and found a half-breed girl playing a guitar. He sat and listened, staring at the moon, homesick, wishing he was not so far from home, and foreseeing a number of things that might happen to Grace and Paul before he returned.

He felt angry with Fred. It was Fred, the single man, who should have come on this trip. It seemed to him that Fred should have been able to arrange the plant operation so that his daily presence would not be necessary. What had Fred warned him about letting a woman go out alone? Yet it had not worried Fred in the least to have his partner go away and leave his wife and child for a couple of months. Mr. Ballinger examined the half-breed girl more carefully. She made him think of Mrs. Reynolds.

He had seen her in the town that morning, a dark, langorous girl with jet-black hair, swinging past him in a short blue skirt, and a scarlet shawl. She had given him one quick momentary glance of interest as she passed. On his approaching now, she had jumped up with a cry, had stood looking at him a moment with the guitar at her side, and had then sat down and resumed her playing.



She was probably eighteen. She was beautiful. Regarding her, he was convinced that she was wicked, that some day she would deceive her husband like Mrs. Reynolds. Her large eyes glowed in the moonlight, and her face and neck were white. White with passion—he thought of that expression. And she made the guitar throb, like a beating heart. The music seemed to come out of the earth at her feet.

He felt an interest in her because of the Reynolds divorce case, and entered into conversation with her when she stopped playing. He was surprised to find that she spoke English well, though with an accent. Her voice was soft, and seductive with a caressing melancholy. As he talked to her Mr. Ballinger knew that, were she his wife, he would be afraid to leave a woman with a voice like this, that seemed to come not from the nose and mouth but to glide from the full curves of her body, alone. But he wanted to talk now, to detach himself from this moon and desert country, and get back to his home. She was a good listener. He told her about Grace and Paul, how he missed them, and how his partner was looking after them during his absence.

She did not seem to understand this last remark. He repeated it. Then she said slowly.

"Oh, your partner!"

Mr. Ballinger stared at the girl. His head was buzzing, but all around was silence. Her face had gathered the moonlight into a smile, a mocking, wicked smile that paralyzed him. She was a wicked, devilish woman to suggest such a thought to him. He seized her fiercely by both shoulders, and approached his face to hers until he felt her breath upon his mouth.

His hands were torn loose, and he was sent spinning through the brush. He stumbled, and fell, ripping his cheek on a manzanita stump. He staggered to his feet. A man stood by the half-breed girl. A horse, with high pommeled saddle, was silhouetted against the moon. The man, tall and booted,

stood with fists clenched and sombrero on the back of his head, evidently a half-breed also, the kind of a man who would knife you in the back when you were down, the kind of a man Mr. Ballinger had no use for—a man like this devil, Guigne.

A grim smile crossed Mr. Ballinger's face as he listened to the half-breed girl telling her companion that the stranger had not kissed her. It mattered little to him now whether the girl had really meant to suggest anything or not; the suspicion had become his own. The two half-breeds became Grace and Fred Hodd. He watched them walking away, the man leading the horse, his arm around the girl, the three of them black against the moon. He stood watching them, and rubbing blood over his cheek with a numb hand, until they vanished into the arroyo.

Then his fury broke loose. He danced about on the mesa shaking his fists at the great yellow moon. He felt himself as elemental as his surroundings. He wished that the half-breed devil would come back that he could tear him to pieces. This man was Guigne, Hodd, a type of the devil that stole a man's wife away from him and broke up his home. He rushed back to the store, took a buggy to the depot, and caught the night train for the north.

On the way suspicion settled into certainty. He remembered remarks of Grace and Fred in which he had seen no significance. This whole mail order idea was a ruse to get him away from Grace. Why had he never thought of this before? Guigne had been a close friend of Mr. Reynolds. These were the men that husbands never suspected, and they were always the guilty ones. He remembered all the cases that had come into the papers. He remembered his antipathy to Mrs. Hodd, her black piercing eyes, and silent manner. Fred was half a dago, and blood would tell. The phrase rang in his ears.

### III

HE arrived at his home after dark.



There was no light downstairs, but the upstairs casements were outlined against the darkness. The blinds were down. He hesitated on the sidewalk, his face turned up to them. Grace was up there. Grace and Paul. Who else?

He thought of all he had done for his home, to make it a happy place for his family, the life insurance—. He knew now that the half-breed girl had not smiled, or spoken the words with any special emphasis, but that he had been keyed just to the point when these particular words had been a revelation to him, that it had been one of those inexplicable things that drummers called a hunch, and which were infallibly correct. And what was a hunch if not God taking pity on a man at last and opening his eyes?

He entered the house quietly, and was not surprised to hear a voice upstairs. It was Grace talking—but to whom? He went to his desk and, taking his key ring from his pocket with its bunch of keys, unlocked the top small drawer and drew out a revolver. Mr. Reynolds had shot Guigne, and the jury had acquitted him.

The chamber was empty. His head swam for a moment, as he was certain he had left shells in it. Then he remembered that Fred had borrowed the pistol since then to take into the country with him, and had used up all the shells. At other times he would have attached no meaning to this fact, but now he was alarmed. It looked as though Fred had anticipated trouble and had used up the shells on purpose. Perhaps Fred was armed—.

He stood irresolute. Then he shifted his grip on the pistol, grasping it around the muzzle. He was a bigger, heavier man than Fred. If Fred was upstairs in the room alone with Grace, and there was misconduct, he would tear Fred from his wife and beat him over the head with the butt of the revolver until he was dead. He would tear him away like the half-breed devil had torn him away, send him staggering, and be on top of him again before he could recover.

He climbed the stairs cautiously. Everything depended upon a complete surprise. Should his presence in the house become known before he was ready to leap, his life might be endangered. When the butt of the revolver struck against the bannister he crouched down, his eyes fixed upon the darkness above, expecting the door to open and flood the hall with light.

But the door did not open, and after an interminable period of suspense he stood before it, the pistol clenched in his right fist, the fingers of his left hand slowly turning the knob.

Through the portières he saw Grace bending over Paul's crib. He slipped noiselessly forward. There was no one else in either room.

A peculiar feeling unsteadied him and made him grasp the back of the davenport, while he threw the pistol into the window-seat. The rooms seemed to have shrunk. They were hot and smelt of soup. Grace wore an old apron. She looked old and dishevelled. Staring at her, the light by the crib changed into a great yellow moon that glided between him and his wife, obscuring his vision.

He became aware of Grace clinging to him, asking him questions, kissing him. Her hands felt limp and wet, her back hard and fleshless. Now she was asking about his cheek. He told her that he had finished his business sooner than he had expected, and that he had cut himself shaving on the train. He was surprised how easily the lie was spoken. He kissed Paul and began to unpack his valise, driven to do this by a vague feeling of horror that he did not understand. If he did not do something he believed he would go crazy.

As he took out his collars and shirts and threw them on the bed he thought of the half-breed girl. Grace bent over beside him to help. He recoiled from her thin body and haggard face. The feeling changed to one of irritation. Her eagerness annoyed him.

He sat on the davenport staring at the floor. Paul began to wail. Suddenly he felt something being slipped



into his lap. Grace was giving him the mandolin to play. He took it from her, and picked a few notes. But he could play no more. The music sounded empty. The throbbing of a guitar was in his ears; he smelt the hot perfume of the mesa. He flung the mandolin to the far end of the davenport.

The fear in Grace's face made him angry. She went away, and he saw her standing beside the crib, as though seeking consolation there. Lucky, he thought, that Paul was still a baby or mother and son would take sides against him.

His irritation increased as he sat there. When his eyes happened to fall on the family picture above him on the right he wondered what they were dreaming of. Something like what he had seen on the mesa that night? A sob rose to his throat.

As he saw that beautiful girl walking away into the moon with the man and the horse his anger found its focus.

That Guigne, that devil, that Greaser who had torn him away from the girl he loved! He felt her warm, firm flesh in his hands, her breath on his mouth. If he had only kissed her! He sprang to his feet.

Grace was beside him again, asking him if he was sick, if there was anything she could do for him, saying that this was the first time he had ever behaved like this. He hated the way she slunk around. Now she was crying, her face in her hands.

Mr. Ballinger, staring at her, knew that it was the heat down south that had put this crazy idea into his head about Fred and Grace, and his home being broken up. His eyes appraised her from head to foot. She was a slatternly woman. No man would want her. He did not want her himself now that romance had come into his life.

He said, furiously, "Well, it won't be the last time! It won't be the last if this whining don't stop."



## Builders

*By Hortense Flexner*

WHO builds him a house of stone or brick,  
 With a roof against the sky,  
 And a base where the ivy roots spread thick,  
 Was born with luck in his eye;  
 For a house will not start, nor mortar stick  
 At a wish or an oath or a sigh.

I know—for I've built as mad men do,  
 With wishes white and red,  
 But the wind blows in, the moon shines through,  
 And the walls shake at my tread.  
 Who builds him a house of a rhyme or two,  
 Must look for the rain on his head!





# Swatting the Fly

*By James Hopper*

I

I KNOW it now: When I was a child the World was passing through a sentimental period. Toward the Life about us, growing daily more distinct, varied and colored, we were taught an attitude of touching and idiotic tenderness. We were told to be good to animals; we were enjoined to "love 'em." We caressed our kittens, we snuggled our puppies, we kissed them and they kissed us, we kissed their kisses and they kissed ours; the idea of a pretty picture was Roy and Rover with their creamy snouts in the same bowl.

The ardor of our love knew no bounds. It leaped beyond the house to the garden, the field and the wood. It stopped not with Legs; it rode, an iridescence, on wings of beasties carapaced or flabby. Being innocent of the dreadful knowledge which belongs, nowadays, to every babe, aseptic and varnished, we were utterly free of fear, we were trustful, adorably. Also, we endowed our dumb friends with our own feelings—with our own complicated souls, our capacity for exaggerated suffering. If we saw a little beast suffocating in a punch-bowl, or being sucked toward a drain, we pictured ourselves being abandoned in the center of an alcoholic sea or being inhaled by a huge crater; and we suffered the horror and the despair we had imagined for the little beast. When an ant was drowning in a puddle, we watched it, every sense tense to its efforts and its distress, and when we had offered it the liberating wisp of straw

—not right away, but rather at the last possible moment—we dilated in an ecstasy of relief.

Life in those days, it seems to me now, was a mere succession of such emotions. Caterpillars, climbing all night the washbowl's polished slopes, above the drainpipe's cryptic hole, and saved in the morning, swooning with weakness; slimy bugs, trapped in the hearth's burning log, running to and fro, and offered the poker's salvation only at the precise moment when mad discomfort began to pass into actual roasting; starved, bereaved puppies nursed back to happy life by means of a rag pap soaked in warm milk; deserted kittens given asylum; dogs, howling in midnight poison pangs, assuaged and saved with copious inpourings of olive oil; flies—

But these shall have a chapter to themselves; upon them it was we lavished the immeasurable treasures of our imbecile affection. The resemblance we found between their vicissitudes and those but lately ours, when babes in the mysteries and snares of the Home, is probably the explanation of this special partiality. For us there had been the doors—the slyly sleeping, dissembling doors—who abruptly seize soft fingers in iron clutches of pain; the flat-faced stove, who radiates torture; the possum-playing pots, springing to life and deluging golden heads with hot viscous liquids; the chair that plunges like the hangman's trap beneath a small foot on its first step toward glorious peaks crowned with jam. All the furnishings of the home—although our fatuous elders knew it not, and called them old



friends—concealed, behind their vacuous lying faces a tight, sleepless, evil intent; and all of them—as some “mediums” now under the scrutiny of Science—bore, tucked and folded within their rotund or angular carcasses, long arms and legs of incredible strength, which shot out like springs, when the elders were not looking, and struck with brass-knuckled fist or iron-shod hoof, causing blue spots, bumps and lumps—and pain and surprise, and indignation passionate.

For the flies, on the other hand, there were everywhere inviting holes which one entered—to find one’s self in a maze like a nightmare, ending in terror and in death. And lakes of ambrosia, of which one sipped to cloyed surfeit, to discover, too late, the heavy wing, the high, pitiless bank—and suffocation in sickening sweet horror. Sugar bowls clapped shut, leaving one in black prison all alone with one’s saccharine sin; and there was the incredible malice of Glass, which placed one face to face with one’s desire—the fresh air, the pretty blue sky, the flowers—face to face with one’s desire, yet infinitely remote, forever removed, while insanely one tried and tried and fought and strove and never reached—and died.

There existed for the fly, as there existed for us, the vigilant hostility of Things, the old malevolence of Matter, a world of grisly traps. And our compassion went to her; we rescued and guarded her; we were gentle deity to her, god-in-the-machine, miraculous life-saver. Lives? I have saved millions of lives—millions of fly lives. Thousands of the little animals have I drawn, dripping, out of my milk, and watched affectionately, their Thanksgiving within me, as they returned to strength on the dry tablecloth, their wings gradually restiffening to iridescence, their fine legs working at their catlike toilette. Upon which, my soul all sweetened with self-esteem of a good deed well done (shudderingly I write it, knowing what I know now) I drank the milk!

I fished them out of milk; out of

wine and beer; out of vinegar, cocoa, tea, tisane, and simple  $H_2O$ . I extricated them delicately from the gluey, glucose horror of jellies, syrups and jams; I drew them from the honey-pot, re-drowned them in that cleansing but rather tartless liquor to which our present legislators seem bound to limit us, and daintily dried them back to dolorous existence in my father’s talcum powder. I held out to them the fraternal broomstraw as they swirled in the kitchen sink’s turgid current, or as they turned, pasted against the vertical walls of the washbowl’s glistening whirlpool; I recovered them with admirable cunning from that irresistible lure, the long-necked bottle. It was at the last moment, usually, that I saved them; enjoying thus more keenly their relief, spiced as it was with the extremity of their late peril, its poignancy of fear and depth of suffering.

There was in all this much of what the wise man calls “projected psychology.” We pictured ourselves in like situations—swept, for instance, on the black stream of some subterranean cloaca, or slowly being sucked toward a hole leading down into nightmare caverns deep in the earth’s bowels. Viewing our insect friends in their crises, we took a certain pleasure—a tight-hearted, tight-lipped, terrible pleasure which enhanced the suavity of the final Thanksgiving. When these emotions did not come to us freely, we were apt to give them aid. I remember a classroom of my childhood, and its arid hours, and their solace. We would catch flies, “drown” them in our inkwells and then “suscitate ’em” by rolling them in the dust which collected in the desk’s pencil groove—thus living vicariously, the extremes of despair and joy.

## II

AND now?

Oh, now, I swat ’em.

For now I know better; I know almost as much as today’s shrewd child.

The change began, I think, with Hux-



ley. When he had proved that a frog, with brain extracted, when thrown into the water would still swim, we lost at once much of our respect for the brain—and the frog. Since then new knowledge has gone all that way; we learned that the animals living with us upon this earth had not our refined sensibilities, and that, resolutely and without qualm, we could resume the old mastery given us long ago, in the first pages of the Bible. We had the right to use them to our needs, discipline them to our severe standards, break them to our whims, and brush them off the planet altogether did they prove recalcitrant.

On top of which came the Bacteriologists, and completed the demolition of our amiable and foolish world. They came with charges; they poisoned our minds with venomous hints; they deafened us with loud accusation; and nevermore—even in those cases where it was admitted mistake had been made—never—such is the strength of slander—were we able to return, toward our former dumb friends, to our old attitude. Our innocence was gone, trust had fled; we looked with lusterless but sagacious eye upon the cat's dainty advances, upon the dog's warm-hearted squirmings, the discreet nudge of the horse. The cat had become diphtheria; the dog, typhoid and tape worm; the horse, lockjaw. Flying and crawling small things were Pest. And the fly—we will not repeat what we have been told of the fly. Never, I think, in the world, against anyone, has so mean a campaign been waged as that against our buzzing erstwhile friend and protégée. Often, at the violence of it, I have wondered if there were not in the crusaders some secret ulterior motive; just as, when I view the Prohibitionists, and their malice, and their vindictiveness, and their hatred, I am forced to suspect that they must be urged by something blacker than the simple human failing which bids one destroy the Neighbor's innocent pleasure, even though it be at the cost of one's own.

And so, I swat them. I wish I had

never begun it; I can't stop myself, now. I swat them, and in this have good company, and the sanctification of church, school and movie. The whole world is doing it. The children, each spring, are gathered for the cause. Garbed in robes of May, flower-girdled and garlanded, in cherubic cohorts they are marshalled, and led to stupendous massacres—heralded later statistically and meticulously by the Homers of the Press, fixed forever by the Michel-angelos of the clicking shutter.

And I swat also, not so gregariously, nor spectacularly, nor idyllically, but alone, with insistence, and somberly. I wish I had never begun it. It is in the retreat of my study that I swat; when I have withdrawn from the World and by the World am supposed to be absorbed in mental toil and meditation. I am not toiling, I am not meditating; I am swatting. I cannot help it; the thing has become a gruesome habit; I am in the clutches of a Vice. Sooner or later, irresistibly, I rise from the table where my work is spread, or, more exactly, where my projects lie, and take up my swatter—a paddle of wire mesh bought in a ten-cent store one peaceful day when the birds sang and Nature was gay and nothing told me, not even a shadow, that by this simple act of passing across the counter my white dime, I was deciding my Future, settling my Fate, chaining myself forever to a restless obsession.

I rise from my table, paddle in hand. In the centre of the study, where lights from northern and western windows meet, the air is green and liquid as the inside of an aquarium. There the flies gather in a passing to and fro, a whirling about, an airy criss-crossing, touching, separating, which has the appearance of an aimless and joyous game—and may be the serious concern of their lives—Love, perhaps.

I rise slowly from the table, take up my paddle and station myself near this spot, thus placing them all well within my reach and beneath my scrutiny. I freeze myself to stillness; I cease to be. To them I cease to be; to them I become



a mere, inert shape, a looming, a part of the landscape as devoid of menace as, to a man walking along a road, the placid mountain on his flank.

I stand thus, dim looming, motionless. They do not see me; I am too large; a hair on my hand is as a tree on a mountain side. They do not hear me; I am silent. My heart perhaps they hear—a profound and dull vibration, the hum of a remote surf. They are unaware of me; I do not stir; I am not even an Earthquake. They are unaware of me; they play. And yet, I am Death.

They play. They pass, sliding along the surface of their impalpable medium as skaters upon ice; or plunge and rise, plunge and rise, like vibrant fish in a bowl. They whirl; they cross and criss-cross; they chase, touch and separate, a lightness is in their wings, a gladness in their hearts.

Then, like the scimitar of a searchlight cutting athwart the skies, my wide paddle hisses downward. The air parts, meets again; I look at my paddle. Several are there, dead, in the mesh.

In the others, a subtle commotion, a vague consternation, is visible. They scatter like atoms to electric repulsion. But I am once more immobile; a familiar looming; a friendly shoulder of the landscape. They return. They are here again, at play. Do they bear with them a memory, the faint shadow of a memory? Or a presentiment, the obscure rudiment of a boding that all is not well with the world? I do not know; they play. They whirl, they dance, they cross; they meet, touch, and part.

Again I cut down among them with my Death—with my absurd paddle which is Death. And more, quicker than a finger's snap, cease to be.

I excite myself; I begin to take pleasure in the game. I practice my tennis strokes—long, swishing drives, brutal downward smashes, delicate backhand sweeps. And they die—by the dozen die, as I amuse myself—and

think, I suppose, it is Law, Nature, Fate.

They do not know what is happening; they have not the least idea of what is happening. To them, simply, as they play something passes—and some are gone. Something passes, so swift it is invisible, so swift it is impalpable—and some are gone. Something passes, some are gone; the rest play on. They have not the slightest idea of my presence there, of my hostility, of my might. Something passes—so swiftly they are not sure something has passed—and some are gone—so swiftly they are not sure that some are gone. They re-gather, and play.

I am there, near them, above them, unseen, unsuspected, and all-powerful; I am terrible. I kill. I kill as I wish and when I wish; I annihilate; I am all-powerful. I kill when I wish and as I wish, my heart a little tight, but a smile on my lips. I kill in amusement; I feel like God—

I am God!

### III

WHEN, at last, I emerge from my study, a little pale, a little drunken, as though from too long and complete an absorption in my toil, I am asked: "Well, dear, did you work well this morning?"

I put on an expression which through long practice I know very well how to put on. It is an expression of self-dissatisfaction, but one so subtly measured that it will not be believed; that the one beholding it will immediately think: "Such a fire of ambition burns in his heart, so high is the ideal he has set for himself, he can never, never rest content!"

And then I say: "Well—not so very well. Well—*pretty* well!"

Upon which she kisses me; kisses my brow, my pale and ravaged brow.

\* \* \*

This is what the Scientific Age has done to me.



# Memoirs of My Night Life

By Charles G. Shaw

## I

**B**RUNETTES and Clicquot 1911; Joe Smith's orchestra and filet of sole *vin blanc*; kisses in taxicabs and scrambled eggs at Childs'.

"Waiter! Another quart."

"Right away, sir."

And how sweetly she would say, "You are the only man I ever loved."

## II

FOX-TROTS and Dimetrino cigarettes; ravioli and Central Park; private dining-rooms and West Fifty-third Street music; stage-door meetings and checks cashed at 3 A. M.

"Ring me tomorrow at six, dear."

And I would promise and then immediately forget all about her.

## III

DRIVES home alone from damn near Yonkers; dawn's grinning face mocking me from the housetops; reflections on the riddle of life; nothing to smoke; empty pockets.

"Heavens! Nearly nine o'clock. Oh, well—two hours' sleep's better than none. Lord! How tired I feel!"

## IV

NICKEL-IN-THE-SLOT pianos and real Würzburger; open hacks and Mulberry Street; chop-suey and Nigger Marshall's; Webster Hall, Sweeney's, The German Village. . . .

"Say! Was you to the operer tonight? Y'ere all dressed up." And I would en-

deavor to pretend that I was a waiter who had just finished work.

## V

ARGUMENTS over the coffee, and hands held under the table; interminable waits in hotel lobbies; altercations with cab drivers; telephoning from drug-stores.

And she would giggle and say, "Oh, you're so funny."

## VI

GLITTERING silverware and powdered shoulders; ostrich-plumed fans and vapid chatter; Conrad's orchestra and a group of stags clustered about the champagne punch.

"May I cut in?"

"Won't you come to dinner Thursday?"

"Are you going to the Thompsons'?"

\* \* \*

"My coat and hat, please. Number 41."

## VII

HURTIG AND SEAMON'S Burlesque; rye and ginger-ale; the Domino Room; Billie's; a marble-topped table in the corner of the café at the Lafayette; the Jefferson Market Police Court. . . .

"What's the charge?"

"Drunk and disorderly, yer honor."

"Guilty. Fine, ten dollars."

## VIII

MYRIADS of memories; those evenings that began with cocktails and ended with promises never to forget; clandestine rendezvous in subway



stations; discussions on Beaudelaire that lasted until three in the morning; . . . sand dunes, starlight, roadhouses . . . the girl I met as I was going home who completely altered the story of my life . . . moonlight bathing, the ballroom of the Ritz, the back room of Calahan's . . . the night she told me that her husband had returned, the discovery of the loss of my front-door key at four in the morning, the pianist in West Forty-fourth Street who used to play "You Made Me Love You"; a strain of "Rosie O'Grady" from a hand-organ on my way home; New Year's Eves. . .

## IX

A SMOKE-FILLED auditorium, the centre of which presents a roped-off ring. There is the clang of a gong.

"Go get him, Spiker!"

"The Kid'll kill him."

"Jab him in the wind, Spiker."

"Cut the clinchin'."

"Bean him again. Yah!"

"Slip him a hook, Kid."

\* \* \*

"TEN seconds more and he'd a had him cold."

## X

DREAMY, lazy nights that floated by with summer; bitter, frosty nights that lingered on and on; nights that recalled Whistler's early "arrangements"; dim, nebulous nights passed in frittering; mad, dissipated nights, unproductive of accomplishment—yet with it all an experience of life obtainable under no other conditions.



## Sortie of Fools

*By John McClure*

FROM bedlams of bewailing  
On this unhappy night  
My idiot dreams embattled  
Come swarming forth to fight.

From hells as black as madness  
And ancient as despair,  
They stalk their ravished beauty  
Loss made more fair.

And where it was they lost it  
On what highways of hell  
They cannot now remember  
Nor do they care to tell.

They seek its fiendish ravishers.  
Waving their insane plumes  
They go in ghostly combat  
To their unearthly dooms.





# Something Ere the End

By Edith R. Curtis

I HAVE never known how it happened, how the cords which had held taut for so many years were loosed. Perhaps it was the scent of the amber-colored hyacinths, or the glimpse of the sunset-bathed Place de la Concorde seen from my salon window. For Paris was abloom with chestnut blossoms for sentiment, a-hum with taxis for gaiety, and, as always, adorned with beauty for delight. Such a symphony may turn even a widow of sixty-five to sentiment. Perhaps neither the candle-shaped blossoms, nor the city, nor the spring were responsible for melting my restraint. In any case, I was happy, even elated, because Dolph Eustis was coming to tea.

Such a blush of anticipation is pardonable in a school-girl but scarcely permissible in a woman over sixty. Dignity demands a better excuse; candor forbids one. For Dolph had always been such a romantic figure in my life, or rather in my imagination, that his mere propinquity thawed the more becoming frost of age. Dolph was still Dolph; and I was still I. And as long as we should continue to meet in a varying world, my problem was still soluble.

As I sat by the open window watching the soft, pink lights (which Paris rightly deems most suited to her evening wear) rival the rosy haze of the dying sun, I was conscious of the old tremor, wonder, and blank that had always preceded a meeting with Dolph. Yesterday, before his arrival in Paris, I had been a respectable, lonely old lady. No one had been farther from my thoughts than Dolph. Letters from my children,

the advent of a possible grandson, and my spring wardrobe had contrasted with the always beloved life of the metropolis to beguile my peaceful days. Today, quite unexpectedly, a *petit bleu* had heralded his coming. He would be with me in a few minutes.

As one grows older one learns to dread the renewal of old friendships. So often the distinguished friends of forty are dodos at sixty-five. How much better to leave them in a setting that becomes them than to risk the obnoxious possibility of decline! I had no time to deliberate about seeing Dolph. He would be upon me at once, ushered in by my hospitable *femme de chambre*, who was always delighted, as she often said, "*avoir dissiper l'ennui de Madame.*" Had I had an opportunity, I should have more especially dreaded an elderly repetition of Dolph. He was a memory that I could not bear to do without!

For fifty years, since girlhood, when I had actually loved him with the awe of seventeen, through the busy home-centered years of my young married life, and the later years when I had shared my husband's diplomatic career, the magnet of Dolph's personal charm had drawn me. To me Dolph had always been the most attractive of men. Yet my feeling for him had been definitely separated from my actual life. My husband's career led us far and wide, making the Southern Cross and the Polar Star as familiar to me as the Big Dipper. My meetings with Dolph were as rare as eclipses.

Possibly my sentiment for him was



but the heritage of an unusually acute, unrequited first-love, for the ravages of such an emotion are deep, and the scars lasting to a girl who combines intense feeling with a proud, reserved nature. My girlhood had been a long self-discipline; no one had known my feeling for Dolph; he least of all. Puritan blood flows not in vain. I had succeeded but too well. In fact, my reserve, at sixty-five, still existed as a barrier between me and all the world, and, which is far more important, between Dolph and me. As we had approached the marriageable age I had fairly leaned over backward in my fear of self-betrayal. The result had been logical, he had never looked at me.

How was I to know at eighteen what I had known so well ten years later, that men of Dolph's type, handsome Lords of Creation that they are, are more often wooed than wooing? Or guess that able, but indolent-minded, handsome males more often take to wife the ripe plum that falls within easy reach? I had made the mistake of crediting Dolph with my own sensitive perceptions. Fortunately for me, my admirers had diverted me from brooding over the long drawn-out repression. One of them had swept me into a happy marriage.

The sentimental journey of a woman of sixty-five should end with wedlock. A post-mortem of a love affair is not inspiring. Far better for an old lady to preserve the dignity of her marriage than to disclose the questionable triumphs of her flirtations.

Nor should I venture to write of Dolph at all if my feeling for him were dead enough for a post-mortem, or my relationship with him vital enough to be called a flirtation. Had it not been for a curious sense of contact which I received whenever I saw Dolph, I should have forgotten these meetings as so many pleasant memories, for to all intents and purposes he was but an old friend. And the

contact is so elusive and indefinable that it challenges description. Impossible that a pair of handsome eyes could work such havoc! For it was but a glance, a mere look, that would so unnerve me.

I used to wonder afterward if he looked at everyone in that way. I would look up, casually, in the midst of a friendly chat; perhaps, while his wife was discussing the children, to meet a look of his. Words fail. Eyes have been called so many things—burning, radiant, loving. Dolph's eyes made me feel as if he and I—two shooting stars whirling through space—were irresistibly drawn together by a law as powerful as gravity. Slowly the rushing of infinity would fade; and the babble of talk would again become intelligible. When his look turned away, only a radiant glow, enveloping, mysterious as moonlight, would remain, as if a magic casement had been thrown wide. We had been attracted to each other only to carom apart with a sense that a repetition of the process was inevitable. Gradually, when the look came again and again, its recurrence demanded an explanation. There was none, unless I chose to believe in a paradox. As I sat by my salon window, I was still wondering if my imagination had repeatedly played me a trick.

I had been waiting so in the twilight, unaware of the creeping dark, when Maria entered and lit the lamps and the fire. The quick flames leaped up; their briskness banished my dreams, and their crackle seemed to summon a decision. In a moment, for my clock was then speaking the hour, Dolph would be there.

Quite suddenly I made a resolve—I would put the riddle to my sphinx! It was so simple that I wondered why I had not thought of it before; and then I realized that my age alone permitted me to abandon the Puritan convention of fifty years. What did it matter if I was forward at sixty-five? I had nothing to lose and Dolph



to gain! Besides, I could not now afford to wait twenty years for a *dénouement*. The gods had been kind indeed to grant me this last opportunity. At the worst, Dolph could but think that I had grown childish, at the best. . . . And then, because I am a woman, I looked in the mirror.

The shaded light was kind; my old face looked wise and responsive. To be sure, there were wrinkles, but they seemed somehow to have come kindly, as if they indicated both gaiety and reflection. Of my eyes I could not judge. They were myself; and at this moment, at least, they must have glowed, though lustreless. No. My face had never haunted his dreams when he had been young, why should it inspire his visions now that he was old? Then I laughed. I was becoming really childish. For either that strange attraction existed between us or it did not. If it was what I felt, age mattered as little to us as marriage. Either Dolph and I were one or—we were old friends.

## II

I WAS inclined to think that it was the latter when he had been in the room five minutes. Yet I was happy to see that time had been lenient to him. It had whitened his hair and paled his cheek, but it seemed to have left his magnificent vigor unbowed. I noted with delight that the firm curve of his mouth—the humorous twist that lent his face so much humanity—was unchanged.

Yet as I studied him with all the detachment that I could command, he seemed the most unromantic of men. He was too handsome, well-dressed, and redolent of success to possess temperament. Life had gilded his fingers too lavishly. Alas, gold is not romantic unless hidden! While my observations seemed to forebode failure, I continued my commonplace talk.

"You, Dolph," I said, "are the last

person that I expected to see! I thought that you were in Washington."

"I came over to consult Mangin."

"For your heart? I hope there's nothing seriously wrong."

"Let's not talk about it," he pleaded, "I'm sick of it."

"No." I agreed. "What fun it is to see you after all these years. Your coming is a real boon to me."

"I should think that you would be lonely so far from home. Nothing would induce me to live abroad. What do you do with yourself?"

Although I knew that such things did not interest him, I told him of the people that I saw, some of whom were literary and some artistic, of the plays and exhibitions that I went to, and of the good books that I had read. Our tastes had always been so different! Dolph was so unsuited to me; the best part of my personality, the literary and artistic half, was a closed book to him.

And yet, as I talked a faint sense of companionship crept about us. As though this, the first time for nearly a generation when we had been left undisturbed by restricting social relationships, had brought us, figuratively speaking, home. Then he talked. He told me about his boy, Phil—his athletic successes in college, his indiscretions, and his charm. I had the not altogether unfamiliar satisfaction of his confidence. There had been occasions in the past, between dinner courses, or strokes at golf, when Dolph had been intimate. These moments were as brief as sunlight on a cloud-blown morning. I dreaded the fog which was too apt to steal between us.

"Does Phil look like you, Dolph?" I asked.

"He's a Eustis," he assented.

We fell silent. And I wondered if I should ever get any nearer. Here we were, exactly where we had been fifty years before. Dolph's presence exercised its usual magic. Even though he had nothing to offer me but the commonplaces of life, though



he could give me neither mental stimulus nor sympathy, I was wanting him more desperately than ever before. I was appalled by the curious gap that yawned between us. Was it my fault or his? Perhaps Dolph was giving me the best that he had.

"You've grown silent, Phyllis," said Dolph.

"I was thinking."

"What about?"

"Oh, of so many things! But chiefly about you and me. Of how long we have known each other, and of how little we know each other!"

"Don't talk Henry James," he mocked, "or I shall not understand."

I accepted the rebuff with a smile and a sinking heart.

"I can remember you in so many settings, Dolph—in ballrooms, and tennis courts, and firesides. All of them were becoming! You were, you always are wonderful!"

I could not look at him as I spoke. I was taking a plunge from the safe pinnacle of restraint on which I had stood for fifty years, into a bottomless void. Dignity could not gauge its depth. I was looking instead at my frail old hands lying white and restful on the black lace of my dress. My voice went on and on; it sounded tremulous, wistful.

"Oh, Dolph," it pleaded, "I don't believe that you can understand what I'm saying, for I've not turned philanderer in my old age, unless you know what you mean to me. All my life I have loved beauty; I am here in Paris now because if there is not more loveliness here than elsewhere, there are at least more people here who crave it. Oh, can't you see, can't you understand that because you are the most beautiful being I have ever seen that I have loved you, will love you all my life?"

My voice sank to a whisper. He was so still that I could not be sure that he heard. Then I looked up and met his eyes. The look he gave me is with me now, and will be, please

God, for all time. It was the old, old look that had haunted me so long, without the wonder and suspense. Instead there was rapture, triumph, and relief. For a space—a moment or an eternity—he held me so, while the universe drifted at our feet. There was no coming together; we were at last completely one.

Then all at once, with a catch of breath, I was back. The damasked walls of the salon dropped on me as a cage is dropped on an escaping bird. The room seemed oppressive and small, symbolic of human life, where feeling is not recognized unless it is labeled and docketed. The old values asserted themselves. I wanted Dolph to speak, to tell me in so many words that he loved me. Then, as if it had been on purpose, fact triumphed over fancy. A hot coal exploded on the hearth. I arose to extinguish it. How typical that was of life! What did it matter to me if the whole room burnt up? Yet I put it out; and the action covered my suspense. His silence became unendurable.

"Dolph," I cried, "speak to me!"

There was no answer.

Then I turned from the hearth and looked at him. He was sitting too still. His coat collar had risen high about his head, which was hunched forward. The arm that hung limply from the shoulder came far out of the cuff. There was no need for me to touch him. I knew by the icy hand that laid a finger on my heart, that he was dead—taken from me at the instant we had found each other. Bitter it was, and is. When confronted with a riddle the sphinx had again turned to stone. But since time and circumstance meant so little to Dolph and me in this life, I may believe. Yet I doubt. The worldly logic of sixty-odd years demands a more concrete proof that Dolph loved me. But each mood of uncertainty compels me to hope, for as this life would be intolerable without a faith in immortality, so immortality is intolerable without Dolph's love.



# The Little Poetry

By Stephen Ta Van

## I

SEMI-OCCASIONALLY, even now, I am reminded by some shock to which the chief reaction is ironic that my career began as a poet's.

The first admitted blast of genius was carried by a sequence of sonnets, of which a sufficiently typical one commenced:

The skies o'er Scheria are always blue,  
Because of one fair presence on the isle,  
One heart that knows not evil thought nor  
guile,  
A maiden ever innocently true.

There were twelve sonnets in all, celebrating the vicissitudes of Odysseus, and for their perpetration I ought to have been reduced to the barnyard, like the enchantress Circe's dupes, rather than lifted to the pranking eminence of a college prize poet.

In cold fact, I was tending cattle less than two years later, as a result of dismissal from the job to which the award had commended me. Since then I have been occupied, by avocation, during numerous spasmodic periods with widening intervals between them, in treading down the remnants of one poetic scheme and assimilating another.

For the poetic miasma, hatched in the peculiar atmosphere of Victorian New England, was a hard fever to chill. . . .

I well remember an early conversation of my Aunt and Madam Lucretia Kinnicutt, anent some precocious literary feat, I standing by, the while, a gangling thing.

"Ah, Pamela," genteelly intoned the magnificent Lucretia, "suppose, just

suppose, it should turn out that you are to be auntie to a *poetic genius*!"

My Aunt's appreciative simper ended with the interview, and was replaced by the conscious look of grim endurance, whereby she signified acceptance, under protest, of the martyr's burden laid upon her by the genius' eccentricities.

## II

THE era was deceptively favorable, educationally, to poetic incubation. Even the preparatory schools—Andover and Exeter—failed to crush budding metric aspiration utterly, and at New Haven, where the college was being re-edited from the old family album into an American version of the university, a hybrid condition encouraged emotional literary effort, though not, I assure you, to the extent of discouraging actively the desired university type.

Byron, by then, was indeed hopelessly dead; but they were arguing about Verlaine's place—whether tenable or not, in view of his lamentable lack of morale. Essays were written, for the *Lit.*, about him, and about Mallarmé, and Arthur Rimbaud (re-discovered). Of course Tennyson was old-fashioned, but a delicate critical situation with regard to him might always be saved by: "How about 'Maud'? Surely you make an exception of 'Maud,' don't you?"

Swinburne? Well, rather outside the pale. Eroticism, in a foreign language, might be passed, but in English was unacademic. The most vital literary discussion was of the Decadents. The *Fleurs de Mal* were of importance



to the Forward Circle; and ah! De Heredia.

I shall orientate (*sic*) the era definitely, for the younger set, by noting that Billy Phelps was intellectually its Peck's Bad Boy.

Professor William Lyon Phelps has now become, during the passage of a quarter-century, essentially a pillar of regularity—defender, in a recent article, of the equally regular Mr. Galsworthy, with a provision against the latter's possible rashness! But in those days he was adjudged, by staid members of the faculty, so reckless as to border on the unsafe, and was the head and front of the English Department's progressive sallies.

A true progressive of his time, I ween: superior, certainly, to many who tried to imitate his paces through that strange shadowland of cloister-politics. I did not elect his Browning course, of which the informal curriculum was a celebrated feature; but I used to write theses, at five dollars each, for sale to the more plethoric of its devotees—a service concerning which the sagacious professor may have had an inkling.

At any rate, I owe him my short acquaintance with Browning. Never, never would I have waded through "The Ring and the Book" and "Pippa Passes," save for his course and my necessities.

### III

THE class, of which I was a kind of adjunct, had a considerable poetic tinge. Brian Hooker and Wells Hastings were among its members, and there was a clearly defined gathering behind it, which was eventually to follow Henry Seidel Canby, after the drift of years, into the palladium of the New York *Evening Post's* Literary Supplement of today.

The trend of this gathering was always neo-classical, if I may venture to use such an expression with the connotation of a neutral academic shade. I do not mean that these men were without originality, but that the prolonga-

tion of the university influence, persistently preserved, submerged them in a shadowy, lukewarm air. One cannot say of the literature emanating from the New Haven Pundits that it lacks conspicuously either matter or form. But what may one say of it, positively or in decided negative? That it is scholarly, polite, intelligent, relatively important—perhaps.

But I was writing of poetry only.

Indigenous oldsters were wont to state that Yale had had no poet since the author of "The Blue and the Gray." Well!

Regardless of the emotional value of those verses, I do not believe that it is within logic for an educational factory which strives successfully for an effective type to turn out an atypical graduate of the first poetic rank. Yale, for example, might acquire accidentally, or conceivably fertilize after acquisition, a logical prospect; but she would not let him escape without her classic imprint.

I am not even prepared to admit that from Harvard, which is a looser university than Yale in mechanical effect, a true poet has ever graduated. Of the most popularly noted, I remember vividly his benevolent aspect; of the next in line, I cannot forget the rather short legs.

### IV

Now if, forcing me to the wall, you demand of me what I think is excellent poetry, I shall tell you, first and perhaps tritely, that it is not intellectual.

I mean: poetry which depends chiefly upon ideas is distinctly mediocre—if there can be such a grade as mediocrity in poetry. Likewise, the poetry that recites a tale, incites to riot or substitutes its measures for strong drink, is worthless to me. If there is a true poetic instinct behind martial, or so-called religious verses, I cannot find it. Noisy poetry, trumpeting about the writer's soul, or strenuously about his desires, or turgidly rolling his emotions forth, is terrible to me, as a brass band,



or the average full orchestra, is terrible in music.

And here I shall say that, musically, I would rather listen to a light song, sung in French, with taste, albeit a little nasally, than to all the blaring of the Metropolitan's musicians and its singers' bellowing . . . A French boy, a few white clouds crossing the sky, and the thin, clear song.

That may also be a key to my preference in poetry; and, remember, I am writing personally, telling you what I like and why, not what you must like, as do some critics. If I offend you, pass me by.

So I prefer the Little Poetry, with one lovely line or phrase, suggesting, maybe ironically, a part of the mystery that cannot be expressed; as the delicate trembling of gray leaves upon the branch that dips across your window in the dawn discloses rhythm in an immensity. . . . I am a mocker of great blondes ramping across the Lounge in diamond harness, with Jewish Finance in their wake. There is a fragrance, I remember, beside a wooded pool; a Shadow laughing from the shadows. I will go back there when the moon is up.

Not much of the Little Poetry is written, ever; and a minimum in America. Need I say that none of it, in my opinion, proceeds from the drum-majors of the procession, however admirable may be their skill as prestidigitators? Nor am I enthusiastic about the schools—Quaint, Bric-a-Brac, Bohemian, Domestic-Bohemian and Sea-Swept, respectively.

But critical jibing is a mere play with words, logical refuge for the ill-natured. What you are waiting to ask me is a specific instance of the Little Poetry that I like.

Then you, in your turn, will have an opportunity to say, derisively:

"Does he call *that* poetry?"

And you will have a defensible excuse for saying it, since the nature of true poetry, to each of us, is as his own soul decrees, or, more frequently, as he has been taught, whether the poetry be by Tennyson or another. There is

no satisfying Q.E.D. here, as in a science.

Bear with me, Rough Reader; remember, I said the Little Poetry was of suggestion—meaning, in part, that it reveals its paths of light only to patient searchers.

Its makers are spiritual hermits, caring as little as men may for the old bawd Popularity, who in any case could not be theirs. Maybe it is their revenge for many slights and hardships, to make the approach narrow to their work. In their thoughts lies their hope of escape.

So, seek. Sift patiently the emanations from various sovereign States. Gold can be found among them, and the search itself will prove instructive—as we used to be told at college, with that sly, chronic professorial smile, having a tint of thwarted sex in it.

For your encouragement I submit two examples, widely separated geographically and as dissimilar in methods: Robert Frost and John McClure.

In the first's favor I am, perhaps, unduly prejudiced, because New England is the very bone and sinew of his work, and after I have finished dancing my habitual fandango upon the Pilgrim eccentricities, the rigorous native land remains my Eden, more sympathetic with its ragged woods and bitter, broken hillsides than any sweep of corn-fat prairie.

I praise the Frost restraint; but all the care, the pruning, would be of no avail without the clean cutting-stroke that individualizes his talent. He publishes little, and his only drawback with me is that the Pundits seize periodically upon the circumstances to make a semi-solemn celebration.

McClure's poetry delights me. It seems more intelligent—as against the dire intellectual brand—than any other that I know. Fortunately, to fit a descriptive adjective to it is difficult; so many adjectives having been abused by so many panegyrists that one hesitates to afflict with any of them a talent that one admires. One of McClure's approximations to perfection is the fact that it is hard to plant a thumb on him.



## V

My thought, at the beginning of this excursion, was of the irony, to an atypical American, of our organized education as applied to art, which I understand to be the apprehension that an individual should acquire, for his own, of life surrounding.

Organized education, from the nursery through the college, catches the prospective type and applies the molds successively, until the adult bones are hard. Tradition, dogma and doctrine, social, historical and religious, in accordance with the period, are inculcated so industriously, that from the cradle to the coffin the pupil has not learned to think — indeed resents violently, from fear, for some years prior to his normal occupation of the coffin, any attempt to make him cerebrated.

He swallows his credo, after a little youthful atheistic gagging, as wholeheartedly as he accepts his manner of dress; according to his condition. His opinions are served to him like his entrees. He is a Republican, a Presbyterian, a cigar-smoker, because of his friends. With the friends, he wears semi-soft collars to business, although to have done so ten years ago would have entailed ostracism. To wear the hard collars of the former time is not a social error yet, but may easily become one.

Organized education has been to me what milk was to my Great-Uncle Paul: an emetic. So strong was that old Victorian's constitutional aversion from the lacteal fluid, that when upon what proved to be his death-bed, he sought to curry favor with a personable new attendant by drinking a proffered draught of it, his stomach, faithful to old prejudice to the last, automatically enforced refusal.

My infant system was force-fed with education from the age of three. All of the New England pabulum — heavy stuff, mental and moral bread-and-treacle — was hustled into me. As an eight-year-old, I recited a lesson in geography, the One Hundred and Third

Psalm and "The Lady of the Lake" with equal fluency. There was a special spot, beside an ornamental jug, under the fluted parlor-mantel's lee, whereon I used to pose, at command, to spout for guests. How those pinched minds, beneath the nodding jet of aristocratic bonnets, must have loathed me!

They did not dislike me more cordially than I distrusted them. There was a deep suspicion in my callow mind that the whole ponderous system, of which they were complacent parts, was ridiculous for me. Outweighed in age, avoirdupois and a strange attribute called worldly-wisdom, which was often preached to me but not explained, I nevertheless felt definitely that I did not want to be filled full of conclusions which might have been fresh enough in their own day, but had grown stale by mine. I despised instinctively the secondary Victorian curriculum, and though I took readily to Latin and Greek, it was because I liked the sardonic spinster in charge — a teacher whom I could not bamboozle.

At college, my objection to the diet went from bad to worse. Cribbed on all sides by authority, I tried compliance, obedience. To no good result; I found myself always a bit out of step with the majority.

It is significant, now, that to defy authority seemed ever, then, the more natural alternative. I can, in fact, remember with pleasure few incidents of my stay at college except unruly ones. . . . Husky and I, in Greek undress, hailing a ribald dawn from the eminence of the Woolsey statue, in defiance of the campus cops. C. V. and I rousing the worthy inhabitants of Divinity Hall at 3 A.M. and dragging them from their cots with shouts of fire. Husky and Chink and I, giving our notorious imitation of Tap Day, by moonlight under the Sacred Tree, before a frenzied audience of fellow-exiles from cafés. . . . Incidents as humorous, saltier, more sinister.

Alcohol knocked Husky out, years later. Me it harried sporadically for a decade, nor did I banish it completely



until I could be rid of the last shreds of its Victorian concomitants, the doubts, fears, inhibitions and hypocrisies of my training.

The Odyssean sonnet-sequence, perfectly insignificant in itself, marks in my story the first violent struggle between training and ambition. The battle was drawn; I succeeded in writing, but had indigestion badly. To a degree I was in the dilemma of Great-Uncle Paul upon his death-bed, when desire and ancient habit collided.

Instead of being buried decently, the sonnets were left exposed, with praise. I used to review them stealthily, but, indeed, I did suspect them, and apologized, in a prefatory note, for having them printed by the donor's wish. . . . I may have printed worse, since. It has been a long road, from the writing of bad poetry to appreciation of what I believe to be good, and much of the way has been difficult. I had to solve two problems, among many, concerning which I had got no hint at college: how to think clearly, and how to earn a living.

But my complaint, if I had one, would be that I had to *unlearn* so much. That prim, protective hypocrisy, pretending not to let the right hand know what the left hand concealed!—like the deception of a sly old maid, behind whose thin-lipped mask, tied with black bonnet-strings, lurks the hidden dancer's leer. . . . The solemn sermons, meticulous observances, cast-iron creeds. The almost desperate emphasis on innocence and abstinence and personal immortality. And all the while the comfortable, sensual, mundane existence, proceeding by fixed rule and habit, against which innovations kept their form but lost their meaning, and much knowledge entered not.

To New Haveners of the older generation, the Civil War was still the War of the Rebellion. Bonaparte's place in history was that of an unscrupulous Corsican; Josephine's, a virtuous martyr's. In the Yale of my day, considerable study of dead languages was compulsory; there was no instruction in the

spoken French or German; anthropology was a minor subject, under suspicion; and the Philosophy Department conducted its instruction under the wing of a professed confidence in orthodox Christianity.

But I have no complaint. It is true that I feel, occasionally, as must the traveler, who, mounting some barbarous, snow-clad trail, falls into the hands of a company of savage women, but is miraculously released, unhurt by them. There is an analogous element of the marvelous in my escape, for the Pilgrim stock and I were essentially hostile, though related. I did not understand it intimately. That murmurous language, bridging its sentences from one family allusion to another, in which my Great-Aunt Pamela, in the days of her extreme age, conversed with her few surviving contemporaries, was as alien as the Basque to me.

I have won out gradually from the shadow of the tall brick dwelling facing the North, to work i' the sun. Doubtless there was protection in it as well as gloom, but if I had remained, developing along desired lines, I might have come to be like another Yale poet—the one, I mean, who was related by marriage (as we say in Connecticut) to forbears of mine. He took his premium seriously, lived an unappreciated bard, on his wife's money, and died advanced in years, still believing himself a genius, with immortal epics in his barrel.

Fortune be thanked! Whatever flare I had for the trombone brand of poetry fell a victim to the academic medication, back there at college. After twenty years among tramps and money-changers, I can maintain a love for the Little Poetry, in books, and at many other sources where it may be found.

For it exists potentially in innumerable unusual combinations, more poignantly even than on the printed page: on a windjammer in mid-ocean, with a red sun going down; and along Fifth Avenue in a hansom on a Spring afternoon, with a girl wearing orchids and pansies—only one in a million can wear them



well! Over Sheep's Nose through a lashing rainstorm, one's boots full of water and Mark Rainey's cousin, blonde as new gold, waiting beyond the ridge; less strenuously, seeing old Exterminator poke his nose under the wire in front again at Havre de Grace, and the drive home with Jerry March beneath a sulphur-colored sky. . . . And ever to watch the bough across the window, dipping, dipping, and the leaf

hanging from the bough, in their comforting and mocking relation to one's self and to each other; to rest a little, while retaining a sense of irony, in contemplation of the dream.

That was what my ancestors the Puritans chiefly missed: sincerity in contemplation of the Little Poetry's beauty. At the risk of smugness, I recommend the study of it to those in search of calm.



## Summons

*By R. Lynn Riggs*

*COME to me with a song in your throat  
Warm as the shades of the loam;  
Come to me softly like a gray boat  
Slipping home*

*Come with red banners ripping the still  
Of a tissue sky;  
Come in the starlight with the chill moon  
Riding by.  
Come with a song, or a laugh, or the sob  
Of a lost throbbing drum—  
O I care never a whit how you come,  
Only come!*



A MAN looks into a girl's eyes and sees the spectacle of Heaven. He marries her and finds that the scene shifters have been busy.



A MARRIED woman gets to hate coming down to breakfast. She is so liable to meet her husband.



A KISS feels like a twenty-one gun salute and sounds like a pop-gun.





# The Embarkation to Cytherea

By Muna Lee

**S**TARING toward the ceiling through the darkness, she smiled to herself to realize that she could not sleep. Such nights had come to her many times; they did not trouble her; she lacked imagination to gild dull moments, but had a vivid visual memory that recalled whatever experience she wished, enabling her to feel its every emotion with undiminished poignance. Deliberately she withheld the experience she desired, that it might be the more delightful for the delay. Her mind slipped back easily into the attitude of childhood.

## II

SHE was five years old and he was twelve. He lived next door to the aunt whom she was visiting; and every afternoon they had eaten tea cakes and lemonade at the little table which he lugged through a gap in the hedge. She and her mother were leaving for home that evening, and she was properly excited over the prospect of the long ride on the train. He had slipped through the hedge to say good-bye, and to bring a surreptitious bunch of pansies. He had cried a little when he gave them to her—such a big boy! She had not cried; but that was twenty years ago, and she remembered that the flower-bed by which they stood was edged with prim triangles of brick and bordered with sweet alyssum—there had been an overturned watering-pot beside them—his necktie was of blue polka-dots—she had never seen him since. But she had not cried.

## III

HER mind skipped a vague period. She was twelve now. The school-room

was big and bare with green plastered walls reminding her somehow of arsenic. The windows to the south looked out over broken prairie to a low line of blue hills. Her desk was by a window. On the platform a harassed instructor was trying to fill with a talk on Japan the twenty-minute period which the curriculum allotted twice a week to "general culture." It was April. Between the window and the hills a blossoming orchard gleamed palely pink. The sky was blue, blue. Something dropped suddenly on her desk. She looked at it for a moment, not comprehending. Then she understood. With her heart fluttering uncomfortably, she carefully unfolded the many-creased oblong of tablet paper.

"You're always pretty," it said with ornate loops and capitals, "but you surely do look sweet with your hair like it is today."

She knew it was from the red-haired boy two desks off, the freckled boy whom she and Jane Humphreys had laughed at yesterday. She looked at the far-off hills.

"Red-head!" she thought bitingly. Then suddenly the syllables changed to a caress which she joyed in the saying, "Red-head, Red-head!"

## IV

THEY sat under a tulip-tree on a boarding-school campus. He was tall and dark and widowed; and he looked at her quizzically while he talked.

"I like sunsets and water better than anything else," she declared with romantic languor.

"And especially if they are combined," he assented gravely.



"I should have liked to be an ancient Roman," she brought forth with a sense of great daring. "I should have worshiped the gods and goddesses."

"Not if it were the accepted religion," he told her smilingly.

She stared past crossed ankles at a twig of blossom fallen from the tulip-tree, small, perfect cups of honey-color and orange, and tasted the full flavor of her enjoyment. This was wonderful. This was being understood. The moment was unique.

"Do you know what I asked them when they read some of your verses in faculty meeting?" continued the pleasant voice at her side, with its delightful, half-mocking undertones. "I interrupted the Dean's flutter of explanation by asking, 'Is this a bonfire or a star?'"

Exultantly she gazed at the tulip flowers. This, oh this, was better than being understood. She was a mystery, then! This moment was perfect.

## V

HE was eighteen and a poet. She was seventeen. They walked past the ugly red brick of the University buildings, climbed a barbed-wire fence with some damage to her skirt, and emerged on a country road. Infinitesimal blue daisies were just beginning to show at the roots of the dead grasses. The damp wind blew straight toward them. He took off his cap and lifted his thin face to the dampness. They walked along in silence until they had climbed a little hill and found the limestone ledge crowning its summit.

"Your poems?" she asked, breathless with the strangeness of talking with a poet. He drew a freshly-copied manuscript from his pocket, and gave it to her to read. [She smiled suddenly, remembering this detail.] As she read, he slipped his arm about her with brusque awkwardness, and she leaned her head against his shoulder, deliciously aware of the roughness of his coat beneath her cheek. Shy of the inevitable kiss, they remained in tense consciousness of

one another. The wind played with their hair.

## VI

IMPATIENTLY she brushed the trivial memories to one side like a stack of cards. What preparation had these been, these halting and crudely-colored moments, for one perfect and petal-white moon? Her heart ached with the beauty of that first afternoon in a room holding jades and ivories casket-like, their beauty classified and numbered along the walls.

"Tell me about yourself," he commanded lightly. "What do you love—birch-trees in a mist, rain over barberies, heavy silks?"

His glance swept the dully gleaming folds of her cape caressingly, and rested upon her face. She considered his question with a gravity which he had perhaps not expected.

"More than anything else," she said slowly, "I like to look at the world from underneath a gray hat with a drooping brim, and to see wet pavements in the lamplight, or waves breaking against rock."

He smiled down at her with a trace of excitement.

"When I have forgotten just where and how we met each other," he promised under his breath, "and forgotten the too many words, I shall remember still that you wore a gray hat and that you loved spray."

"You will remember it where?" she asked unhappily. "There will be so much to make you forget."

His lips brushed her hand from finger-tip to wrist.

"I shall remember it," he said, "when the coffee-trees at the fazenda are like spray. That will be in December. Or when a rose and apple-green sunset hangs over the Seine. And always when I walk through a mist. There are places that you have never seen which, when I recall them now, will seem to me places where we have walked together; for they are places where we should have walked."



"Tell me," she said without turning her head.

"An olive orchard in the Apennines," he told her, "with daffodils knee-high under the trees, and hot sunlight broken into islands of blue shadow. There is a cracked stone bench in one corner where I should read you of Paolo and Francesca. And at sea—I cannot bear to think of being on shipboard again without you. There are so many interrupted hours at sea—"

"It is hard for me to realize that you will live in cities I shall never see—speaking a language I do not understand. In what language do you think of me?" she broke off jealously.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Tell me what Rio de Janeiro is like," she said. "That is what must have molded you."

"That has had less to do with me than any other capital I have known," he assured her disparagingly. "It is like any other place. But there is a beautiful bay with a great rock islanded in it, and precisely half the distance up the rock is the Halfway House, where one may get the best rum in the tropics. There is an English sailor who for twenty years has wished to see Rio from the summit of Encorvado, but at every attempt he becomes so drunk at Halfway House that he has never reached the summit. There are Paris hats in the shops, and a street railway we call the 'litanpaur' and a great park with wild parrots. There are my people. And there is an American colony of hearty young men," he said mockingly, "hear-r-rtty young men—"

Absently he lifted her hand to his lips again. She drew it away with a sudden exclamation of protest, directed rather against his absent-mindedness than his caress. His eyes grew sombre at the repulse.

"You are too circumspect," he said vehemently; half in love, as she realized, with her imperviousness to vehemence.

They wandered into the corridor and she listened to the sparkling river of his comment in a half dream of happiness that did not reach beyond the present

moment. He was the only person she had ever heard who talked well for the joy of talking. Speech, which had always seemed to her a non-essential, was suddenly revealed as something which might be beautiful as the wind among reeds, which might fall silvery as rain.

"You have the brow of the Beata Beatrix," he told her, "and the hands of the Dante beneath her. But you have the wide eyes of a child. It is not good," he warned her lightly, "to have the hands of Dante and the too-clear gaze of a child."

"Why do you think that you care for me?" she asked beneath her breath.

"I love you first," he said, looking not at her but at the wind-swayed robe of a young Botticelli saint, "because you are beautiful."

Some instinct of honesty, or it may be of self-preservation protested.

"I am not at all beautiful," she told him.

"I love you; therefore you must be beautiful," he retorted angrily.

She acquiesced silently in the logic of this. He continued, in much the same manner as he had used in analysis of the last Primitive.

I love you because you are a woman, and honest, with all that implies; and perhaps because my heart makes music from your silence. I think that you are like a flame-tree, quiet and green, until the December rains send long flames of red blossom across its boughs."

"You love me," she said, "not for what I am but for what you think I might be."

"It is for that that one loves, always," he acknowledged.

"And if there is never a flame of red blossom?" she asked.

He looked at her with compassionate tenderness.

"Then," he answered slowly, "it will end in weariness, instead of in pain, as it should end."

She experienced a sudden hopeless sense of loss then, asking, "Must it in any case end in pain?" and he in turn asked gravely,

"How else could it end?"



They leaned from a balcony, looking down at a replica of a tomb of the Medici. There was the semi-twilight of museum afternoon about them, and an absolute detachment from all the rest of the world. They were in a seclusion comparable only to the seclusion of a crowded avenue. They paused here, looking down at the tomb, and his voice warmed as he praised the beauty of the woman's effigy as though life were in the marble flesh, breaking off suddenly in angered protest,

"Oh, shameful! She lies there unveiled as only her husband should see her, and he lies dead beside her!"

And in a moment he added, low-voiced and passionate,

"I would have such a tomb for you and me, and have it sealed within a crypt never opened."

His kiss was upon her forehead, her lips.

It was dusk. . . . A perverse demon had led her to choose this hour, which seemed peculiarly their own, and this place, the low wall above the lagoon, to tell him that she was going to marry Batchelder. He received the information with an imperviousness that surprised her.

"Yes, you would do that," he assented ironically. And then with cutting emphasis.

"You will see palm-groves and flame-

trees after all—at Nassau. You will be one of the American colony there. They will talk of you with a British drawl. You will dine with them and they will apologize for their silver."

His unimpassioned protest died away.

"I have seen your T. P. Batchelder," he said slightly, "a big fat man, vastly an imbecile."

"You must not speak of him like that," she told him without conviction.

"You will remember me," he warned her with a hardening look, "you will surely remember me when that fat man makes love to you."

She swept her mind clear again. It was only the unreality of young love that was worth living over. If now she might smile at an episode, re-living it, recognizing how well he had played his part, she could recognize that she had played hers even better, deceiving even herself. Young love with its insincerity, its poignance—one could feel an artistic pride in its moments of heart-break.

"Tell me about yourself," he commanded lightly.

She was once more in a room holding jades and ivories, considering gravely questions of little import. And his voice swept on through the hours that led to the unpleasant light of day, talking easily, breaking off into moments passionate or tender, filling her with a beautiful unhappiness.



THE trouble with some people is that they can't see any higher than Heaven.



AT sixteen she was heavily guarded. At twenty-six she was heavily rouged.





# In Extenuation of a Peculiar Taste

By George Jean Nathan

## I

NO less than once a week I am asked by some otherwise amiable person why I, after all these years, persist still in consecrating my time and what measure of talent I may possess to a critical consideration of the theatre. "You have said your say," they tell me. "The theatre is too trivial for your later years. Why continue? Why not devote your effort to books on other and more important subjects?" I have been told this so often of late that it has begun to disturb me a bit. It is time, I conclude, to seek counsel with myself. Why, then, let me ask of myself, *do I persist?*

Performing, in the first volume of his "Prejudices," a critical phlebotomy upon me, Mencken made the following observation: "At the brink of forty years, he remains faithful to the theatre; of his books, only one does not deal with it, and that one is a very small one. In four or five years he has scarcely written of aught else. I doubt that anything properly describable as enthusiasm is at the bottom of this assiduity; perhaps the right word is curiosity. . . . I sometimes wonder what keeps such a man in the theatre, breathing bad air nightly, gaping at prancing imbeciles, sitting cheek by jowl with cads. Perhaps there is, at bottom, a secret romanticism—a lingering residuum of a boyish delight in pasteboard and spangles, gaudy colours and soothing sounds, preposterous heroes and appetizing wenches" . . .

It is true that enthusiasm does not figure in my effort. I am, constitution-

ally, given to enthusiasm about nothing. But it is not true that curiosity is at the bottom of my effort. While curiosity is an habitual impulse with me, it has no part—or at best very small part—in my devotion to the theatre. To the final indictment, however, I offer a plea of guilty, though with reservations. The theatre is, to me, a great toy; and upon the toys of the world what Mencken alludes to as my lingering residuum of boyish delight concentrates itself. What interests me in life—and my years have since he wrote marched across the frontier of forty—is the surface of life: life's music and colour, its charm and ease, its humour and its loveliness. The great problems of the world—social, political, economic and theological—do not concern me in the slightest. I care not who writes the laws of a country so long as I may listen to its songs. I can live every bit as happily under a King, or even a Kaiser, as under a President. One church is as good as another to me; I never enter one anyway, save only to delight in some particularly beautiful stained-glass window, or in some fine specimen of architecture, or in some great, throbbing organ. If all the Armenians were to be killed tomorrow and if half of Russia were to starve to death the day after, it would not matter to me in the least. What concerns me alone is myself, and the interests of a few close friends. For all I care the rest of the world may go to hell at today's sunset. I was born in America, and America is to me, at the time of writing, the most comfortable country to live in—and also, at the time of writing, the very



pleasantest—in the world. This is why, at the time of writing, I am here, and not in France, or in England, or elsewhere. But if England became more comfortable and more pleasant than America tomorrow, I'd live in England. And if I lived in England I should be no more interested in the important problems of England than I am now interested in the important problems of America. My sole interest lies in writing, and I can write as well in one place as in another, whether it be Barcelona, Spain, or Coon Rapids, Iowa. Give me a quiet room, a pad of paper, half a dozen sharp lead pencils, a handful of mild cigars, and enough to eat and drink—all of which, by the grace of God, are happily within my means—and I do not care a tinker's damn whether Germany invades Belgium or Belgium Germany, whether Ireland is free or not free, whether the Stock Exchange is bombed or not bombed, or whether the nations of the earth arm, disarm or conclude to fight their wars by limiting their armies to biting each other. On that day during the world war when one of the most critical battles was being fought, I sat in a still, sunlit, comfortable room composing a chapter on æsthetics for a new book on the drama. And at five o'clock, my day's work done, I shook and drank a half dozen excellent cocktails.

Such, I appreciate, are not the confessions that men usually make, for they are evil and unpopular confessions. My only apology for them is that they are true. That is the kind of dog I happen to be, and, I take it, a curse upon me for it! But if some tremendous event were breaking upon the world and men and women were shaking their heads in terrified foreboding, I know myself well enough to know that if I had an agreeable engagement for the same evening I should keep it, were the streets flowing with lava and the heavens thundering forth their "Feuersnot." I speak, of course, figuratively, for if it so much as rains I do not challenge my comfort to the point of going out and getting

my hat wet. What I mean to say, in plain English, is that if it rested with me to decide upon the fate of the West Virginia coal miners or to hear Fritz Kreisler play the fiddle, the West Virginia coal miners would have to wait until the next day. The Soviet theory of government doesn't interest me one-tenth so much as Gordon Craig's theory of the theatre. Whether the Methodists will go to heaven or to hell when they die doesn't interest me one-twentieth so much as Adele Astaire's dancing. And whether the Japs will conquer Los Angeles or Los Angeles the Japs doesn't begin to interest me one-hundredth so much as whether Anatole France's next novel will be as fine as his memorable "Revolt of the Angels." I am not glibly posing myself here as an "artist," an aloof, exotic and elegant fellow with a maroon bud in his lapel and his nose in the air. I am merely a man gifted, as I see it, with an admirable practicability: one who believes that the highest happiness in life comes from doing one's job in the world as thoroughly well as one knows how, from viewing the world as a charming, serio-comic, childish circus, from having a few good, moderately witty friends, from avoiding indignation, irritation and homely women, and from letting the rest—the uplift, the downlift, the whole kit and caboodle—go hang. Selfish? To be sure. What of it?

## II

BUT what has all this directly to do with the theatre? The theatre, as I have said, is to me one of the world's pleasures. On such occasions as it devotes itself to fine art it is one of the world's genuine pleasures. On such occasions as it devotes itself instead to the spectacle of Dutch comedians alternately kicking each other in the *scrobiculus cordis* and falling violently upon their *amplitudina emphatica*, it is a pleasure no less, albeit of a meaner species. It is, of course, not to be denied that for one evening of real pleasure in the theatre



one often has to undergo a number of profound tortures, but the same thing holds true of the æsthetic satisfaction to be derived in an art gallery, where bogus art is often no less relatively in evidence than in the theatre. One reads a dozen new books before one encounters one that imparts a glow. One sits through a dozen new plays before one encounters a "White-Headed Boy," or a "Concert," or a *pas seul* by George Bickel—and through nine or ten dozen before one encounters a "Cæsar and Cleopatra." To hold against the theatre on that score is to hold as well against most of the other sources of æsthetic gratification.

With all its faults, the theatre has amused and improved the spirit of man for centuries on end. Like the doll, it is the one toy that has outlived, and will continue to outlive, the horde of attacking years. It has now and then risen to greatness; it has now and then fallen to triviality—so has literature, and music, and sculpture, and painting. William Shakespeare and Owen Davis, Michelangelo and Paul Manship, Peter Paul Rubens and Penrhyn Stanlaws, Johann Sebastian Bach and Raymond Hubbell. There is no argument in contrasts; there are always contrasts. But aside from the question of the theatre's place in art, it remains that the theatre is good fun—and it is of good fun of one kind and other that I am, at the moment, speaking. My days are spent professionally in the channels of literature—my mornings with reading, my afternoons with writing. When evening comes, I am occasionally very glad to have done with literature. Dinner parties I can't abide; they bore me to death; I never accept an invitation to one if I can lie out of it. Drinking is amusing enough, but it is not easy to find sufficiently amusing persons to drink with. I am, furthermore, a bachelor and have no household duties to concern me, no wife to drive crazy, no offspring to play peek-a-boo with. Clubs do not interest me. Every time I enter one, some terrible wet-blanket, prepos-

terously overjoyed at seeing me again after so long an absence, rushes up to me, invites me to dinner on Wednesday at the other end of Long Island, and asks me to tell him confidentially if it is really true that Irene Castle is in love with her husband. I lost my taste for card playing some years ago; if I want to go to a supper party there are still four hours to kill; and the diversions that most persons favour in the intervening time do not especially quicken me. There is left, as Goethe agreed, the theatre. There is left, between the demitasse and the bedtime cigarette, this night "Romeo and Juliet," that night Sam Bernard, this night "Electra," that night Marilyn Miller, this night a smash of beauty and that, a smash of slapsticks. A farce by the young Guityry, an operetta from the Kärntner-Ring, a burlesque show down in Fourteenth Street, the monkeyshines of Robert B. Mantell, a Eugene O'Neill play, a touch of double meaning from Budapest, an unintentionally jocose English "society play," a tune by Oscar Straus or Emmerich Kalmann or Victor Herbert, a Ziegfeld show, something by Dunsany or Synge or Rostand or Thoma, a revival of some excellent comedy or merely, perhaps, a trim ankle, a sudden, surprising lightning flash of real poetry, a comedian with an allegorical set of whiskers—one pays one's money and takes one's choice. It is the grab-bag nature of the theatre that makes it what it is. It is not curiosity that takes me there, but hope.

But all this has to do with the theatre merely as a diversion, and not as the peg for a writing man on which to hang, as I have more or less hung, a career. Pleasure is one thing, serious work quite another thing. Well, let us see. The theatre, as I look at it, is one of the best subjects in the world with which to fashion a variegated assortment of predicates. It is almost impossible for the writer on politics to use politics as a hook whereon to hang his opinions, say, of music or cow diseases. The same thing holds true of writers on



music itself, or painting, or architecture, or sports, or science, or archaeology, or economics, or religion, or almost anything else save books. The theatre, to the contrary, by the very nature of its diverse constituent elements and its peculiar ramifications offers to the man who writes about it a hundred convenient opportunities to air his views *con sordini* on nearly everything under the sun, and what a writer craves are such opportunities. What is more, these digressions from the main theme are not, in dramatic and theatrical criticism, so patently or objectionably out of key as they would be in other forms of critical exposition. Furthermore, if Mr. H. G. Wells is justified in using the history of the whole world to work off his implied opinion of Lloyd George, I see no reason why objection should be made to me for using a single line in a play by Mr. Samuel Shipman to work off my opinion of unipolar induction, sex hygiene, the political situation in central Siam, or anything else.

For such meditations, the theatre provides an admirably provocative field. One of the best ideas I ever got for a digressive essay on humour came to me while I was watching the characters in a Strindberg play go crazy. The best essay on Shakespeare that I ever composed was inspired by a play written by the Hattons. My most valuable sardonic ideas on the labour problem came to me while a two-hundred pound blonde in strip tights was being chased around the stage of a fifty-cent burlesque theatre by an Irish comedian, as the soundest theory I ever achieved on the flaw in Regulus' African campaign in the first Punic war was inspired by a shapely leg in a Gaiety show. This is why my critical writings deal at times with trivial and obscure plays and playwrights. The trivial is often the inspiration of something that is not trivial. Shakespeare so engrosses and encompasses the mind that it cannot wander, cannot stray into other meadows. It is in the tensest moment of a Broadway crook play that one philosophizes upon

the initiative and referendum, the life and habits of the bee, the condition of the babies in the southern provinces of Russia, the art of Henri Emmanuel Félix Philippoteaux, and the battle of Bull Run.

I am, of course, not so vainglorious as to imply that what I personally am able to derive from the trivial is always unfortunately also not trivial; I address myself simply to the theory, which is, at least in the instance of others more talented than I, sound enough. The common notion that only great art can inspire and produce great criticism does not entirely convince me. Great criticism often from little acorns grows. Dryden's "Defence of an Essay of Dramatic Poesy" grew out of a third-rate preface to his brother-in-law's book of fourth-rate plays, as his "Of Heroic Plays" and "Defence of the Epilogue" grew out of Buckingham's inconsiderable "The Rehearsal." Some of the greatest criticism in Lessing's "Hamburg Dramaturgy" grew out of completely negligible theatrical performances. Goethe wrote imperishable criticism that grew out of plays by Kotzebue, Raupach and Iffland, and some of Zola's finest critical writing (*vide* "Our Dramatic Authors" and, more particularly, "Naturalism in the Theatre") was inspired, during the years of his service as dramatic critic, by the trifling exhibitions he was forced to sit through. Some of Hazlitt's most pointed criticism in his celebrated "On the Comic Writers of the Last Century" was derived from such artistic immaterialities as Mrs. Centlivre, the actor Liston, and Cibber's feeble "Love in a Riddle," together with such mediocrities in playwrighting as Bickerstaff, Arthur Murphy, Mrs. Cowley, Charles Macklin and John O'Keefe. And half of George Bernard Shaw's admirable critical essays are founded upon such things as "Trilby," "The Girl I Left Behind Me," "The Sign of the Cross," "The Colleen Bawn," "True Blue," "The Sin of St. Hulda," "A Night Out," "Under the Red Robe," "The Sorrows of Satan,"



"The White Heather," "The Heart of Maryland"—plays by Sydney Grundy, Stanley Weyman, Marie Corelli, Herman Merivale, Paul Potter and David Belasco—French bedroom farces by Antony Mars, Drury Lane melodramas by Cecil Raleigh, and leg shows. . . . A thousand trivialities are placed in the test tubes of æsthetics that a single piece of sound criticism may endure. Ten thousand unknown men die in battle that history shall record—and the human race take inspiration from—the name of a hill.

### III

THIS, then, is one way in which I, hopeful of worthy critical accomplishment on some future day, look on the theatre. I do not deny, plainly enough, that I might perhaps more profitably devote my efforts to writing on a subject or subjects of conceivably graver importance to the world we live in, some such subject, say, as a theory for the improvement of the condition of the working classes, or birth control, or civil service reform, or international peace, or bridge building; but I know nothing about such things, and, as I have already said, care less. What interests me are not the troubles or problems of the world, but its joys. Art, the thrill of beauty and the æsthetic happiness of the minority are among these joys. And in so far as the theatre can provide them, the theatre engages me.

Life, as I see it, is for the fortunate few—life with all its Chinese lanterns, and sudden lovely tunes, and gay sadness. In so far as I have any philosophy at all, it is founded upon that theory. For the Nietzschean "Be hard!" I have no use, however. It savours too much of cannon, thong and overly intense purpose. For myself I substitute "Be indifferent." I was born indifferent; and at forty I find myself unchanged in attitude. When I read some enkindled yogi's indignations over the slaughter of eight thousand Polish

Jews, or over the corrupt administration in this or that country, state or city, or over the Ku Klux Klan, the absence of true culture in Idaho, the riots in Dublin, or the political machinations of the American Legion, I only smile, and wonder. Indignation does not make, and never has made, the world any better than has my own objectionable philosophy of contentful *laissez faire*. No great man from Jesus Christ to Stonewall Jackson has, in his effort to make the world better, been fired by philosophical asperity and spleen. Great Britain, the greatest nation in history, has never been, and never is, indignant about anything. Nor has been or is the nation of tomorrow, Japan. The chronic indignation of France is rapidly driving her onto the rocks.

It is in this spirit that I seek the theatre as an outlet for my ideas. An idea, on whatever subject, seems to me to be more in key with my attitude toward life if it is predicated upon an art. I like the notion of that kind of ideal genealogy. Art is, in the view of nine-tenths of the human race, bootless, "unpractical." Thus, whether good or bad, art provides an admirable postulate for my philosophical snobberies. Life, to me, is artificial; all my criticism of drama is based upon the theory that drama is artificial life. There isn't so very much difference, in my way of looking at things, between life as it actually is and life as it is shown in the theatre. I have often been accused of this attitude by critics of my criticism, and often been lambasted for it; I plead guilty to the charge. The theory that drama while admittedly mimicking life yet in some esoteric way departs violently and absurdly from life is maintained chiefly by persons whose life departs violently and absurdly from drama. "That isn't true to life," said the Harlem shoe-dealer, as he watched "Lord and Lady Algy." "That isn't true to life," echoed the flapper, as she watched "Rosmersholm" . . .

Artificiality is often a premise from which one may draw sound, genuine



conclusions. There is no more logical reason why a sound philosophy may not be extracted from such variably factitious a thing as a play by Björnson than there is why a sound philosophy may not be extracted from some such equally variable and factitious a thing as the naturalist transcendentalism of Lorenz Oken or the Kirkcaldyan gospel of unscrupulous Mammonism. If there is in all this an air of what Mr. Burton Rascoe alludes to as the intellectual practical joke that I frequently play whereby I may have my little laugh on the reader, I hasten to make assurance that it is the fault of my defective writing alone, and not of my convictions. That I am not always able, alas, to make the most of the opportunities that the theatre and its drama offer in this direction, that the ideas I am able to develop from the artificiality of the theatre are not often notable or even remotely interesting, is nothing against the doctrine and everything against the meagreness of my talents.

Drama, to come more intimately to cases, is—to me—one of the most interesting of the seven arts. With music and literature, it appeals to me more than all the others in combination. Unlike sculpture and painting, it is alive. It is quick, electric; genius in flame. It is literature: they are Siamese twins. It is, in Shakespeare and even in such as Rostand, music: music on the violins of metaphor, on the 'cellos of phrase, on the drums of rumbling adjectives and verbs. There is for me a greater æsthetic thrill in the second scene of Act II of "*Midsummer Night's Dream*" alone than in all the paintings in the two Pinakotheks. There is for me a greater æsthetic pleasure in Synge's little "*Riders to the Sea*" than in all the sculpture in the whole of Italy.

But, the argument goes, the theatre does not always, or even often, vouchsafe such agreeable and tonic reactions. Well, neither does the printed book page in literature nor the concert hall in music. If the theatre gives us a new Roi Cooper Megrue more often than it

gives us a new Hauptmann, so the printed book page gives us a new E. Phillips Oppenheim more often than it gives us a new Joseph Conrad. And the concert hall gives us many more Vincent D'Indys and Tschaikowskis than it gives us Liszts. What man is there who wouldn't sit through fifty compositions by Erik Satie, Walter Braunfels, Harry Von Tilzer, Tosti, Josef Suk, Rudolph Friml, Hans Pfitzner, Zdenko Fibich, Othmar Schmoeck, Elgar and Ravel if that were the price for hearing Chopin's scherzo in E major? And what man is there who wouldn't sit through fifty plays by Horace Annesley Vachell, Jules Eckert Goodman, Charlotte Chisholm Cushing, the Rev. Thomas Dixon, Wilson Collison, George Scarborough, Cosmo Hamilton and the Hattons if that were the penalty for seeing, on the fifty-first evening, Rostand's "*Last Night of Don Juan*"? Art, whatever her platform, is sparing, even miserly, with her genuine gifts.

But, unlike in the instance of the other arts where it is a case of art or nothing, a case either of æsthetic satisfaction or æsthetic irritation and disgust, the theatre is often immensely agreeable in an obscene way when it is not concerning itself with art of any size, shape or colour. When it is concerning itself with art, the theatre is at once great, noble and hugely delightful. When it is not concerning itself with art, the theatre is neither great nor noble, but it is often hugely delightful just the same. I have made bold to hint as much on a previous page. Mr. Charles Judels' lengthy description of his brother's prowess as an architect of superhumanly toothsome omelets in the show called "*For Goodness Sake*" has no more relation to art than it has to pleuropneumonia in horses, but it would take a peculiar idiot to deny that it isn't tremendously enjoyable for all that. August Wilhelm Schlegel would have laughed himself sick over it. And so would any other serious and important critic and art lover either before or since



his time. W. C. Fields' golf game, Fred Karno's night in an English music hall, Harry Tate's aeroplane flight, Frisco's derby hat and cigar acrobatics, "Krausmeyer's Alley," the old Russell Brothers' act, Bert Savoy's Margie, Collins and Hart's muscular nonsense, George Robey's painted nose, Brandon Tynan's serious acting—of a thousand and one such things is the gayety of the non-art theatre composed. There is, in the theatre, a surprise ever around the corner. It may be a great performance of "Hamlet," or it may be a good new blackface comedian—or it may be a memorable night of superb awfulness such as that provided by the play called "Survival of the Fittest" down in the Greenwich Village Theatre. Each, in its different way, is excellent diversion.

If one goes to a concert hall and hears a bad performance or to an art exhibition and sees only bad paintings, one's disappointment is complete. In the theatre, contrariwise, the worst play and performance of the year may provide the greatest hilarity. I have been going to the theatre professionally now for more than eighteen years, and the four most thoroughly amusing evenings I have engaged during that time were provided by as many exhibitions so excessively bad that they baffle description, to wit, the play named above, the showing of "The London Follies" at Weber's Theatre about a dozen years ago, the play called "The Sacrifice" written, produced and financed by a Brooklyn baker with his fat daughter in the star rôle, and the late Charles Frohman's production of Bataille's "The Foolish Virgin." Nor do I set down merely a personal experience. There is not a man who saw any of these who will not whole-heartedly agree with me. For the theatre is never more entertaining than when its effort to entertain skids, and when the species of amusement that it

provides is not strictly of the species that it has intended to provide. James K. Hackett's Macbeth with the fresh shave, talcum powder and round Milwaukee hair-cut, Mrs. Fiske as the sixteen-year-old heroine in the first part of Edward Sheldon's "The High Road," Robert Edeson's new patent leather pumps in the African jungle scene of a Rida Johnson Young masterpiece, Louis Mann's professorial curtain speeches expatiating upon the literary properties of the gimcrack in which he is at the moment appearing, Jane Cowl's society play in which the Knickerbocker club, the Ritz hotel and the Rolls-Royce motor car are mentioned every few minutes and in which the male guests at a fashionable town house appear at breakfast—if my memory doesn't err—in tennis flannels, the child actress as Mielchen in the production of "The Weavers" at the Irving Place Theatre who drops a piece of extremely intimate lingerie in a particularly tense dramatic situation, the Belasco adaptation of a Picard farce-comedy in which a chorus girl lives with a theatrical manager for a month but modestly declines to let him kiss her—find their match for sheer low amusement if you can!

That, in essence, is the theatre as I see it; that, the theatre to which I devote my pen, and with a pestiferous catholicity of taste that embraces "Oedipus Rex" and "The Follies," Eleonora Duse and Mary Eaton. I do not take it very seriously, for I am of the sort that takes nothing very seriously; nor on the other hand do I take it too lightly, for one who takes nothing very seriously takes nothing too lightly. I take it simply as, night in and night out, it comes before my eyes: a painted toy with something of true gold inside it. And so it is that I write of it. I criticize it as a man criticizes his own cocktails and his own God.





# The Intellectual Squirrel-Cage

By H. L. Mencken

I

*A Lady Metaphysician*

MISS MAY SINCLAIR'S latest book, "The New Idealism" (*Macmillan*), bears a somewhat unfortunate title, for those of her regular customers who do not mistake it for a *Tendenz* novel in the manner of H. G. Wells will probably assume that it is a volume of mystical platitudes in the manner of Gerald Stanley Lee, Dr. Frank Crane, the late Woodrow and the editors of the *New Republic*, and so avoid it diligently. It is, in fact, neither. Instead it is an extremely learned and voluble (and often not a little waspish) treatise upon the fundamental problem of philosophy, to wit, the problem as to the nature of the visible world. To the ordinary man, of course, no such problem exists. If you ask him what a brick is he will answer simply that it is a brick, perhaps adding that by a brick he means a fragment of matter. But if you take this ordinary man, run him through college, give him the degree of *Artium Baccalaureus*, and then detain him for three or four years more and promote him to *Philosophiae Doctor*—in brief, if you make a professor of him, and so fit him for the higher ranges of human thought—he will very likely abandon his native theory of the brickishness of bricks, and substitute the theory that there is no such thing as a brick at all, but that brickishness is no more than a figment of consciousness. If he makes this leap he has become what is known in the groves of learning as an idealist, which is an even worse variety of idiot than the idealist who sang "Onward, Christian Soldiers!" in 1917 and 1918, while realistic profiteers rolled

up for us our war debt of \$30,000,000.-000. In other words, there is something in the world that is yet more nonsensical than the state papers of the Woodrow aforesaid. You will find it spread copiously through the fat and turgid tomes that *Privat Dozenten* study and try to understand. It began with Berkeley, it developed in the hands of Kant and Hegel, and it still rages so furiously that even Miss Sinclair, otherwise a very intelligent woman, as some of her novels prove, is more or less wobbled by it.

Often, when reading such things as the speeches of Dr. Harding, "The New Freedom," the economic manifestoes of the Bolsheviks and the editorials in the *Saturday Evening Post*, a glow passes through me, and I say to myself that I have at last witnessed a singular and beautiful thing: imbecility purged of all its customary dross, and so made pure and ineffable. But always, on such occasions, my joy is at once dissipated by a sudden memory of the long rows of tomes written by philosophical idealists—most of them very famous men, and vastly respected by thousands of connoisseurs who have never read them, and would not survive the attempt if they tried. In these tomes human folly is boiled down to its ultimate essence. Here the dunderheadness that is in all of us is subjected to a temperature of 10,000 degrees Centigrade, and so transformed into exquisite crystals of nonsense. I do not speak by hearsay. In my earlier days, desiring to increase in wisdom, I read the chief of these volumes one by one, pausing every now and then to pray for divine guidance. I was at the job, in fact, for a good many years, and finally got it done. When I



began I was in doubt and unprejudiced: I couldn't make up my mind whether a brick was a brick, or a bubble in my brain—whether I was aware of it if it struck my head, or only aware of a sensation of having been struck. But once I had read the idealists I was done with idealism, and I hope forever. It is my firm conviction today, unshakable by any process of pure reasoning, that a brick is a brick—that it actually exists, as surely as my consciousness exists—that it stands absolutely independent of my consciousness, and would continue to exist if I were hanged tomorrow—that everything palpable to my fully awake and undiseased consciousness exists just as surely, and is just as independent of what I think of it. It is a consolation to discover that even university professors of philosophy are beginning to verge toward this view—that idealism is gradually sliding into the cellar where the realistic Greeks kept it. It is a much greater consolation to reflect that realism is the philosophy of practically all men who are not professional philosophers, from the Huxleys and Virchows down to the Henry Cabot Lodges and Jack Dempseys, and that the whole business of the world is conducted upon the assumption that it is true.

In brief, idealism, in both its metaphysical and its political senses, is little more than a disease of the fancy—the unintelligent floundering around in the swamp of the unknowable. I thus marvel to see so hard-headed a girl as Miss Sinclair writing a whole book about it—worse, in defense of it. I hesitate to tell you just what her argument is, for trying to state the case of the idealists is quite as dangerous as trying to state the case of their intellectual poor relations, the Christian Scientists; both answer every effort to put their transcendental flights into plain English by declaring pityingly that one is too stupid to understand. What she proposes seems to be a sort of compromise, not unsuggestive of that of Kant. She, too, has her Absolute. But whereas Kant made his Absolute stand for the fundamental realities that even the most romantic

idealist could not escape, Miss Sinclair seems to make hers a sort of depository of all the idealism that realism cannot definitely blow up. As I say, I may fail to grasp her notion precisely. I have read her book diligently, but that is not enough. In order to make anything out of idealism one must first be an idealist. That is to say, in order to be instructed one must first be convinced.

## II

### *Camille at the Bat Again*

NEXT to idealism the prime fatuity of modern man is occultism in its varying forms. Two volumes upon the subject stand before me, both by eminent Frenchmen: "The Great Secret," by Maurice Maeterlinck (*Century*), and "At the Moment of Death," by Camille Flammarion (*Century*). Both books are undiluted garbage—worse, garbage that is not even put up in attractive packages. Maeterlinck's consists of a dull rehearsal of the highly dubious history of magic, with dark hints toward the end about the odylie fluid and other such transcendental Ayers' Sarsaparillas. Flammarion's is a confused accumulation of transparently nonsensical reports of spiritualistic marvels—reports gathered chiefly from witnesses so obviously fraudulent or insane that not even the Supreme Court of the United States would believe them. Spiritualism, like political idealism, has ceased to be a mere folly and become a first-rate graft—a scheme to keep the boys out of the trenches and give them soft jobs. If you would get rich quickly, simply give up your professorship, your Rotary Club secretaryship or your shoe-jobbing business, and take to the stump for the poltergeist. The tour of Sir Oliver Lodge, I confess shamelessly, filled me with temptation: he took in more money than William Jennings Bryan or Fatty Arbuckle. The later tour of Sir Conan Doyle shook me so greatly that I had to enter a monastery to escape the devil at my elbow. Now comes the perennial Camille. Having no English, he is unable



to visit the United States and tackle the boobs directly, but he at least knows how to sell his books. On the day that the present one was published he worked the Associated Press correspondent in Paris for a column story on his latest "discoveries" among the spooks—the old and familiar farrago of buncombe. This rubbish was duly cabled to America, and hundreds of American newspapers printed it upon their front pages the next morning! I can imagine the ghost of Tody Hamilton writhing enviously in hell. Who was the press-agent of Gaby Deslys? If Camille himself was not the expert who foisted her upon the Americanos, then there are two of them of that exalted talent. I offer to both my respectful genuflections.

So much for two Frogs, the one only pseudo-ranidaen. Now for the king of the pond: Anatole France no less. Few books in these late sad years have given me more genuine joy than his volume of "Opinions" (*Knopf*), set down by Paul Gsell and done into English by Ernest A. Boyd. Gsell is Boswell reincarnate: alert to wit and yet almost wholly humorless, a dog-like fellow, a superb reporter—in brief, the ideal literary valet. His book records fourteen conversations that he heard at the Villa Saïd, France's house in Paris, with a fifteenth taken down at Auguste Rodin's place at Meudon. France, it appears, keeps open house once a week, and all sorts of disciples and admirers come to see him, from members of the Institute to wandering Socialists from the Balkan hinterland. An extremely attractive audience for a shrewd and gassy man, and the Master, in front of it, is at his best. Turn to the chapter on elections to the Académie Française, to that on the nature of literary greatness, to that on Rabelais, to that on war, to that on skepticism—in fact, to any one at random. Everywhere you will find one of the first intellects of the age in full function—everywhere you will find sharp common sense, a devastating and yet kindly humor, an incomparable mixture of humanistic passion and worldly wisdom. A whole theory of the theatre,

perhaps the soundest ever formulated, is compressed into a few pages. "M. Bergeret," said Gsell, "does and does not like the theatre. He likes it because a den of mummers arouses his curiosity. He is amused by actors, who have the brains and the vanity of peacocks. He is attracted by actresses, because of their gracefulness, their princely manners, their superb vacuity, or their malicious cleverness, and by the swarm of coxcombs, nincompoops, financial sharks and political puppets which gravitates about them. He doesn't like the theatre because . . . he doesn't." But the mummer is only half of the show. What of the dramatist? Aye, the dramatist, too! "Claptrap is the only thing that has any chance of reaching the public ear." But certainly not Molière, Racine, Corneille—! "Corneille knew that well . . . Molière . . . repeats the same thing three or four times, to make sure that it is understood. Out of six or eight lines there are sometimes only two that count. The others are simply padding. . . ."

I commend the book heartily. It offers a brilliantly vivid portrait of a thoroughly civilized man.

### III

#### *A Socialist Publishing Venture*

THE Ten Cent Pocket Series of books issued by E. Haldeman-Julius, publisher of the well-known Socialist weekly, the *Appeal to Reason*, is obviously modeled upon the Universal-Bibliothek of the German publisher, Philipp Reclam. Reclam's little volumes, in their simple red-paper covers, are familiar to everyone. The series is now fast approaching its 7000th volume, and is so rich in books of solid value that the whole library of many a German is comprised within its limits. I turn to the latest issue of the *Börsenblatt für den Deutschen Buchhandel* and note the week's additions: a volume of tales by Alfred Huggenberger, the Swiss; one of fairy tales by Gustav zu Putlitz; a translation of Tschaiakowsky's memoirs; a new edition of Schiller's



"Kabale und Liebe"; a collection of the aphorisms of Giacomo Leopardi, translated by Gustav Glück and Alois Trost; a translation of all the quotations from foreign languages in the works of Schopenhauer; a humorous work by Klara Nast. In brief, the Reclame library is genuinely universal; it includes everything in belles lettres from the comic poems of Otto Julius Bierbaum to the complete works of Ibsen, and from Benvenuto Cellini's autobiography to "The Imitation of Christ." Moreover, every volume is well edited and clearly printed, and the price is very low—20 Pfennig before the war and three marks now.

I wish I could say all that of the People's Pocket Series, for the public need and appetite for it is shown by the sale of 7,000,000 volumes in the two years since it was begun. But the truth is that, in the midst of much capital stuff, there is an admixture of unutterable drivel, and that the editing and printing show all the usual Socialist incompetence. The 239 volumes sent to me for review are printed in half a dozen different sizes and faces of type, and sometimes two are in the same volume. Worse, there is a confusing duplication of materials. One of the volumes, for example, is "How Voltaire Fooled Priest and King," by Clarence Darrow. But the essay is too short to make a whole book, even at 10 cents, and so it is supported by another essay by Darrow, entitled "Crime and Criminals," and by a short piece of the late Robert G. Ingersoll, apparently an extract from one of his lectures. The same essay, "Crime and Criminals," is reprinted in another volume of the series: "The Stoic Philosophy," by Prof. Gilbert Murray. And "How Voltaire Fooled Priest and King," beside giving its title to a volume of its own, is also used in two other volumes: "Realism in Art and Literature," by Darrow, and "The Trial of William Penn." Finally, "Realism in Art and Literature," with the title slightly changed, is used to pad out "On the Choice of Books," by Thomas Carlyle.

Nor is this all. Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village" is in both the volume entitled "Great English Poems," where it undoubtedly belongs, and the one ostensibly given over to Tennyson's "Enoch Arden." James Russell Lowell's essay, "On a Certain Condensation in Foreigners," is supported by some "Random Notes" by Tolstoi! Thomas Hardy's "The Three Strangers" is followed by an essay entitled "From Superstition to Science," by Henry M. Tichenor, an obscure Socialist! The printing, as I say, is often atrocious. Some of the volumes sent to me are so clumsily trimmed that the type lines run uphill. Some begin in 8-point type and end in 10-point or 12-point; others reverse the process. In the anthologies different faces of type appear in successive captions. Everywhere there is villainous proof-reading and incompetent make-up. Nowhere is there the slightest sign of the care and good taste which characterize the Reclame books.

I go into these defects at length, because it seems to me that all of them could be remedied easily, and that they ought to be remedied in common fairness to the persons who buy the books. The series, fundamentally, has a great deal of merit. It offers, at a low price, reprints of many very excellent books, and in widely separated fields: most of the plays of Shakespeare; some of those of Ibsen, Molière and Oscar Wilde; such tried favorites as "Alice in Wonderland," Æsop's fables and Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales; good selections from the short stories of Balzac, de Maupassant, Kipling, Hardy, Tolstoi, Andrejev, Anatole France and Victor Hugo; volumes of essays and aphorisms by Montaigne, Bacon, Chesterfield, Schopenhauer, Huxley, Tolstoi and the Greeks; some books of sound criticism; a lot of good poetry; volumes of proverbs; a few practical handbooks; some amusing reports of debates. Such stuff ought to be a great deal cheaper than it usually is; it is pleasant to see it offered at 10 cents. But the value of the series is diminished by the blemishes



that I have mentioned, and no less by the inclusion of a number of tenth-rate books. I note three in example: "How to Be a Leader of Others," "How to Develop a Strong Will" and "How to Develop a Magnetic Personality." It is not agreeable to think of a poor man laying out his money for such garbage, and then solemnly digesting it. He'd be much better occupied asleep in the sun.

I observe that in the volume of Walt Whitman's poems there is no sign of "A Woman Waits for Me." This, however, is not the fault of the editor and publisher. When the poems were originally issued in the series they were substantially complete, but the Postoffice Department issued a mandate that they be expurgated. The reason given therefor in the ukase of the officiating Dogberry, Postoffice Inspector George H. Booker, was that the book was cheap! The very same stuff, sold at ten or twenty times the price, goes through the mails freely, but when it is within the means of the plain people it is forbidden. I quote from the official opinion of the Kansas District Attorney: "There are too many beautiful poems to warrant any sincere publisher taking chances with the suggestive matter contained in the booklet." In brief, the usual bray of the usual ass. The publisher who prints books at 10 cents is forced by law to confine himself to the dissemination of "beautiful" poems; the publisher who charges \$2 may mellow them with a few that are salty!

#### IV

##### *Fiction*

Of all the new fiction, "Indelible," by Elliot H. Paul (*Houghton*), has interested me most, for it has novelty in both form and manner, and shows a great deal of freshness and vigor. I regret to have to add that it also shows some very bad faults, including the inexcusable one of sentimentality. At bottom, indeed, Mr. Paul's story differs very little from the sweet and uplifting novelles of commerce: it has the same

idealist for its hero, he falls in love with the same pure and doting maiden, they are separated by the usual misunderstanding, and they come together in the last chapter with the same old gurgle. As frequently happens of late, the heroine is a Russian Jewess. This is the reply of the more sentimental Young Intellectuals to the effort of the Ford-Hughes-Palmer-Daugherty camorra to make public bugaboos of Trotsky and company. Five or ten years ago, before the official lying about the Bolsheviki began, the kike was a comic character in our fiction, and to me, at least, extremely amusing. But now he is turned into an idealist sweating patiently under intolerable wrongs, and his daughter becomes a lovely one who knocks the romantic male *Goyim* off their bases. In Mr. Paul's book she is Lena Borofsky, and her victim is Samuel Eldridge. Sam, living in a decayed Boston suburb as the son of a carpet-beater, develops a talent for the zither, transfers to the pianoforte, goes to the Boston Conservatory, and there meets Lena, who is studying the violin. One day a piano lid falls on her fingers and cuts them off, and she disappears in despair. But in the end, as I have said, she and Sam are united, and when the curtain falls a little Lena is on the way, and expert opinion is to the effect that she will be a good fiddler when she grows up.

The best parts of Mr. Paul's book are those in which he permits Sam to tell his own story. The thing, true enough, is not carried off with complete success; Sam makes observations that no boy of 14 or 15 could conceivably make; the overwhelming verisimilitude of "Huckleberry Finn" is simply not there. But allowing for this persistent intrusion of the author, it must be confessed that, within his limitations, he achieves a very vivid picture of the Eldridge household and of the neighborhood in which it lies—that Carpet-Beater Eldridge and his silly wife have a great deal of reality in them, and that there is scarcely less in most of the lesser personages, especially the girls with whom Sam engages in bouts of



calf love. The usual machinery of the novel is disregarded. Mr. Paul tries to get his effects by direct and very simple means, and more than once he succeeds brilliantly. If "Indelible" is a first novel, then the second from the same factory should be worth reading attentively. What oppresses the author most severely is the sentimentality I have mentioned. Now and then he squeezes tears in the unashamed manner of Dickens, and always he is too much affected by his heroine and her troubles to see her clearly. I know a good many Russian Jewesses and admire them greatly. Like American women, they have all of the charm that is denied to their men-folk. Moreover, many of them have a barbaric and almost diabolical beauty—a heritage more Tartar and Kalmuck than Jewish. But to depict them as sentimental is to libel them. They are, in fact, very self-possessed and clear-headed gals, and for one of them to run away from an eligible husband is a phenomenon that has never been witnessed in real life, I venture, since the first day of the Diaspora.

More novels that offer civilized entertainment: "The Other Magic," by E. L. Grant Watson (*Knopf*); "Merton of the Movies," by Harry Leon Wilson (*Doubleday*); "The Secret Places of the Heart," by H. G. Wells (*Macmillan*); "Life and Death of Harriett Freen," by May Sinclair (*Macmillan*); "Deadlock," by Dorothy M. Richardson (*Knopf*); "Vocations," by Gerald O'Donovan (*Boni*); "The Love Story of Aliette Brunton," by Gilbert Frankau (*Century*); "Intrusion," by Beatrice Kean Seymour (*Seltzer*); "Rahab," by Waldo Frank (*Boni*); "The Longest Journey," by E. M. Forster (*Knopf*). All by authors heard from before. I simply list their books: all are workmanlike and fit to read, but not one of them seems to me to be first-rate. Two novels about the Negro problem: "Birthright," by T. S. Stribling (*Century*), and "White and Black," by H. A. Shands (*Harcourt*). Both seriously done—but both full of obvious defects.

Some short stories: "The Hounds of Banba," by Daniel Corkery (*Huebsch*); "Adam and Eve and Pinch Me," by A. E. Coppard (*Knopf*); "The House of Souls," by Arthur Machen (*Knopf*); "The Shepherd's Pipe," by Arthur Schnitzler (*Brown*); "The Garden Party," by Katherine Mansfield (*Knopf*). Here, on the whole, is much better stuff: the short story is easier than the novel, even to an old hand. I especially recommend the stories of Miss Mansfield, Machen and Corkery. Machen belongs to that curious band of authors whose reputations remain esoteric. He has a number of very ardent admirers in the United States, James Branch Cabell and Carl Van Vechten among them, and more in England, but the general reading public seems to be almost unaware of him. His tales are strange, ghostly grotesques, quite unlike those of any other current practitioner. They are certainly worth reading.

## V

## Briefer Mention

THE NATURAL PHILOSOPHY OF LOVE, by Remy de Gourmont (*Boni*)—"Natural history" would be better English. What de Gourmont sought to do in this very serious volume was to relate the mating of man to its more primitive forms in the lower animals. An excellent translation by Ezra Pound, but defaced by good Ezra's theory that *species* is a plural noun and that *specie* is its singular.

SHALL IT BE AGAIN?, by John Kenneth Turner (*Huebsch*)—An indispensable book, badly named, on the history of the American participation in the late war. I shall review it at length later on.

THE POETIC MIND, by F. C. Prescott (*Macmillan*)—A development, with considerable additions, of the ideas set forth in Prof. Dr. Prescott's earlier book, "Poetry and Dreams." As I have often said, I regard most of them as extremely sound. The fact that the majority of the bad poets now in practise in the Republic view them with horror supports them admirably.

MY DISCOVERY OF ENGLAND, by Stephen Leacock (*Dodd-Mead*)—Pieces suggested by Dr. Leacock's recent chautauqua tour of the Motherland. Amusing in spots, but in the main pretty obvious.



WAITING FOR DAYLIGHT, by H. M. Tomlinson (*Knopf*)—A collection of *causeries* running from 1915 to 1921. Pleasantly written, but certainly not overcrowded with ideas.

ASPECTS OF AMERICANIZATION, by Edward Hale Bierstadt (*Stewart-Kidd*)—Mr. Bierstadt, after exposing various dubious schemes of the professional Americanizers, confesses and even boasts that he himself is engaged in the uplifting work of the Foreign Language Information Service. I observe no evidence, however, that this organization is appreciably better than the others. So far as I have been able to observe, in fact, *all* such vereins are useless, mischievous and public nuisances.

THE PRINCIPLES OF INTERIOR DECORATION, by Bernard Jakway (*Macmillan*)—At last a clear, simple and intelligent book upon the subject. It is aimed, not at the professional decorator, but at the layman, and it gives him a great deal of valuable advice without waste of words. The pictures and diagrams are very well devised.

TERRIBLY INTIMATE PORTRAITS, by Noel Coward (*Boni*)—Excessively laborious and stupid humor.

THROUGH THE SHADOWS WITH O. HENRY, by Al Jennings (*Fly*)—Jennings and Henry were in prison together. This is the story of their first meeting in Central America, and their subsequent association. It will interest Ohenrymaniacs, but to most other readers it will probably seem a vast puffing about nothing.

ASPECTS AND IMPRESSIONS, by Edmund Gosse (*Scribner*)—A collection of magazine papers by the well-known English critic. The men dealt with range from Rousseau to Lord Wolseley and from Clemenceau to Ibsen. A book not to be sniffed at—dull but accurate, and in the main sagacious.

THE ECONOMIC BASIS OF POLITICS, by Charles A. Beard (*Knopf*)—The Clark lectures at Amherst. A small book, but one full of shrewd judgments and sound historical knowledge.

A MANUAL OF THE SHORT STORY ART, by Glenn Clark (*Macmillan*). PLOTS AND PERSONALITIES, by Edwin E. Slosson and June E. Downey (*Century*)—Two volumes addressed to the morons who believe that the manufacture of short stories may be taught and learned as the manufacture of batik sofa-cushion covers is taught and learned. The results in both cases are the same: a vast piling up of bad stuff. It is part of the curse laid upon me by God that I am compelled professionally to read hundreds of short stories concocted by the pupils of such jitney Flauberts. I accordingly call upon the public hangman to burn both books forthwith.

MY DIARIES, by Wilfrid Scawen Blunt (*Knopf*)—A new issue of a work that no intelligent American should miss reading. It offers a brilliant and accurate panorama of English history during the past 45 years—not the official history of the country, but the actual history. On almost every page there is something worth knowing, and always, in the recounting of it, there are the manners of a civilized man.







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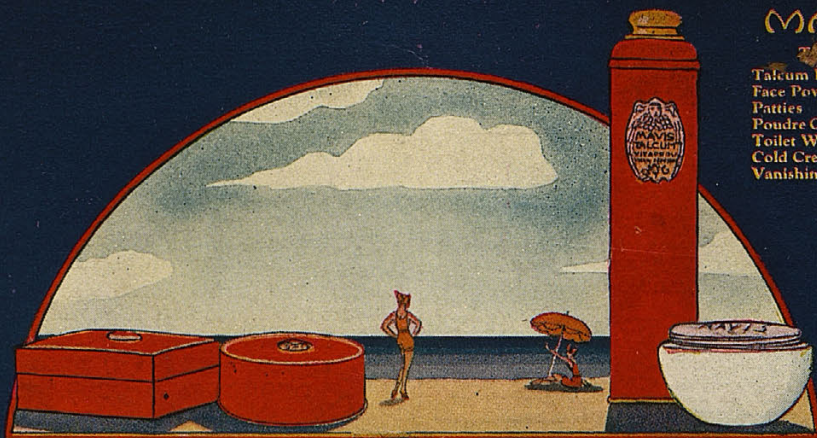
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